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AMONG THE  
FRANCISCAN TERTIARIES

**¶ Terminus ordinis francisci de penitentia nunciatus**



TO ALL LOVERS OF SAINT FRANCIS  
IN THE CENTENARY OF HIS CANONISATION  
1228—1928

# AMONG THE FRANCISCAN TERTIARIES

By  
NESTA DE ROBECK



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Per comperar l'amor tutto ho dato  
Lo mondo; e mi ho tutto barattato.  
Se tutto fosse mio quel ch'è creato  
Dariarlo per amor senza ogni patto.

*Opusc. B. Francisce III.*

Nam quia non est major paupertas quantum  
non cognoscere Deum.

*Angela di Foligno.*

LONDON & TORONTO  
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.  
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO. INC.

BX  
3651  
D4

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT  
THE TEMPLE PRESS, LETCHWORTH, HERTS  
FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1930

# 3452

**Nihil obstat**

GEORGIUS D. SMITH, D.D.

*Censor deputatus*

**Imprimatur**

EDM. CAN. SURMONT

*Vic. Gen.*

WESTMONASTERII

*die 21 Octobris 1929*



## FOREWORD

THE dedication of this book is already out of date, for the centenaries of the canonisation of Saint Francis, Saint Margaret of Cortona, and the foundation of the Piccola Casa della Divina Provvidenza are past. Yet I wish to leave it as it is, for it was during the centenary that these studies were begun. They are but impressions taken here and there in the history of the Order, as we see the spirit of Saint Francis reflected at different times and from different angles.

My most grateful thanks go to all the kind friends who have helped me, the scholars who have taught me, and above all to the Saints who have so enriched my life by what I have learnt of theirs.

I have taken all the quotations of Ramon Lull from Professor Allison Peers's translations, and can only hope that many people may study the Catalonian martyr in Professor Peers's own admirable biography. The extracts from Blessed Angela of Foligno are taken from the edition of the Assisi manuscript published by the Abbé Ferré.

There are other aspects of the Third Order which I have failed to grasp; the spirit of Saint Francis shines in many other Tertiary saints whom I have neglected. To collect a few rays of that spirit has here been my only object.

NESTA DE ROBECK.

MAY 1929.



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CHAPTER I  
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## CONCERNING THE THIRD ORDER

THE 3rd of October, 1226, saw the closing of the earthly life of Saint Francis, the end of the first stage of his universal mission. Sister Death had come to him as a second bride while the birds sang in the evening sky above the Porziuncula, and Saint Bonaventure tells us that "A brother who was a disciple of Blessed Francis saw his soul, radiant as a shining star, surrounded by a pure white cloud which carried it straight to Heaven to rest in Christ his Beloved in eternal joy."

To those who remained on earth it was a grievous loss, yet as they gazed on his body, marked with the Stigmata, and glorious in death with a hitherto unknown beauty, they must have felt that this was no ending, but a beginning—the opening of his unrestricted mission to all mankind. This mission of the glorified Saint Francis began at once, and the miracles at his tomb were a sign to the world of the unfailing charity of the Poverello. Seldom indeed has it fallen to the lot of any human being to inspire love and reverence as he did, and from every side arose the demand for his canonisation.

Saint Francis had innumerable friends, but none more constant than Cardinal Ugolino, who in 1227 succeeded Honorius III and ascended the papal throne as Gregory IX. His first move was to Assisi to the tomb of his friend, and he presided over the cause of canonisation which was held at Perugia. It lasted for about two years and on 16 July, 1228, in the perfect setting of an Umbrian summer day,

amid great rejoicings, the name of Francis was inscribed on the roll of the saints. No church in Assisi was large enough to hold the crowds, and the Pope's throne was set up in the open space before San Giorgio. Famous for his eloquence, Gregory delivered a splendid oration, and well might he say of him he had loved: "He shone in his days as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, or as the moon at the full. And as the sun when it shineth, so did he shine in the temple of God."

It was not enough to canonise Saint Francis, and the Pope at once decreed the building of the new church which was to be the shrine of the saint, a papal palace, and a centre for the growing Franciscan family.

There was, however, a greater work to be accomplished than the building of any outward memorial, however beautiful. The unending memorial to Saint Francis is still in the making, for it is built with the living stones of his followers, and its glory is in their work for establishing the Kingdom of Christ upon earth. This is the second stage of the mission of Saint Francis, to which his earthly life was but the prelude; the mission which develops with every century and under all the changing conditions of life.

. . . . .

The enthusiasm of the recent Franciscan year, which drew pilgrims from all parts of the world to Assisi, must not end with any material centenary. Now that the anniversary of the canonisation is passed, our thoughts naturally turn to those first years of the Order and to the meaning of Saint Francis's teaching in our own modern world. Our attention is no longer absorbed by the earthly figure of the saint; rather we look on and see his spirit

reflected in his children. Even the greatest saints have a side to their work and personality which is temporal, and even fleeting, that which is bound up with the material and moral conditions of their age, and part of their mission has therefore always special reference to the needs of their own surroundings. There is, however, another side which knows no limitation, and is for all time and all countries; which can be applied to the most varied circumstances, and which unites the most divergent personalities into one spiritual family.

Have we not the supreme example in Christianity itself? And as the saints are the rays who most surely lead us back to Christ the central Sun, so too we learn to know the saints when we see them reflected in their great followers. This is true of all founders of religious orders. The most eloquent commentary on the founder is in the lives of the disciples he inspires; and in the case of Saint Francis it is a volume of many pages, and very far from being finished.

Perhaps the most striking outward characteristic of the Franciscan Order is its variety. May not even the dissensions which arose between the different parties round the standard of Poverty in this respect have been a blessing in disguise? The main idea of Saint Francis was surely the evangelisation of all mankind; and in this vast mission every variety of holiness, both contemplative and active, has its place, even as the life of Saint Francis himself was an ordered sequence of contemplation and apostolic labour. There are not one but many widely differing vocations in the Franciscan call.

. . . . .

The time has passed when it was customary to

represent Saint Francis as a solitary oasis in an ecclesiastical desert; and his unique spiritual genius stands out all the more clearly when we see him in his proper relation to the other religious figures of his age. So, when we consider this particular question of the Third Order, its importance can only be rightly appreciated if we bear in mind the somewhat similar organisations that Saint Francis must have known of, or even seen existing in the world around him. The idea of a lay branch to a religious order was not of his originating, but he was able, as no one else, to give it a spiritual impulse which is yet unexhausted.

The laity was a very powerful and vital element in the religious life of that time; more so perhaps than it has ever been since. Even before Saint Francis was born the tide of spiritual enthusiasm was already rising, and in various parts of Europe institutions were forming which had for their object the apostolate of the layman.

Already round various Cistercian and Benedictine abbeys groups of devout laity had gathered, more or less loosely affiliated to the community, for there was a growing tendency on the part of spiritually-minded persons to form themselves into groups without renouncing the claims and duties of home life. Regular lay orders, too, began to arise.

It is enough to quote the Order of the Hospitallers of Saint Anthony (who gave hospitality to Saint Francis when he went to Rome in 1209), the *Fratres et Sorores ad Succurendem* who anticipated the Franciscan Tertiaries by nearly a century. There were also the association of the *Béguines* in the north, the Poor Catholics and the *Umiliati* in the south. These latter were already divided into a first, second, and third order, and of them Jacques



de Vitry wrote in 1216: "For Christ's sake they have given up all, they are gathered together in divers places, and live by the labour of their hands. They hear the word of God gladly, and often preach themselves; steadfast in faith, sound in doctrine, they are fruitful in good works." The cardinal lays stress upon the faith of the Umiliati, probably because of the heresy of the Cathari, that old Manichæan poison which was so active in Italy and Southern France. The twelfth century, with its sense of spiritual unrest and expectation and of latent spiritual energy, was a receptive soil for fruitful spiritual plants, but also for noxious spiritual weeds. It had already seen reformers such as Arnold of Brescia, Pierre Valdez, and the Abbot Joachim, but none had seized the helm with the unerring eye of the sure pilot. There were many sects, more or less orthodox, consisting of people dissatisfied with the world who sought for new light first in one direction then in another.

Lady Poverty was indeed waiting for her knights, and the world in all its striving was waiting for her. A new message was necessary; one which would not only fire the imagination, but comfort the heart and strengthen the will for the daily battle of existence. It came, as Mr. Chesterton has described, as a dawn in which was the singing of birds, and as the breath of freedom and new life. Joachim has indeed sung, "*Qui vere monachus est, nihil reputat esse suum nisi citharam,*" as the ideal of the monk. That ideal Saint Francis took and offered not only to the monk but to all men, and far from calling them to some elect sphere apart, he went into the highways and byways, into the slums of life, and carried there the light and peace and joy of the Gospel.

. . . . .

Never has any saint been more continually in touch with different kinds of people than Saint Francis. He grew up among the ardent politics of a small hill city with important business connections. Above all, he felt the spirit of his age, as only a warmly responsive nature could, and he looked upon the needs of his fellow-men with a supreme sympathy.

Very seldom indeed have average men and women been so loved and considered as they were by him; and his overwhelming success was surely because of his immense love and trust of ordinary human nature. Many people under his kindling enthusiasm became suddenly capable of great things, of living at their best. When the whole village of Cannara came trooping after him, it was because, for the moment at any rate, each soul there rose to a heroic level, and in accepting them Saint Francis opened his arms to the whole world. Each one of their homes henceforth was to shine with the living motto *Pax et bonum*.

This episode is nearly always quoted as the origin of the Third Order, though the town of Poggibonsi also claims the first place in its history. Possibly neither place saw the actual origin of the Order of Penance, though they may both have been among the first to embrace its rule. Padre Golubovich has pointed out there is even good reason to think that the Third Order arose, like the other two, in Assisi, indeed at the Porziuncula. Saint Bonaventure in his *Legenda Major* says how, after the rule had been approved in Rome in 1210, Saint Francis brought the brothers to Santa Maria degli Angeli; "that *here* where the Order of the Friars Minor had its beginning, it should increase through the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and through her Blessed Son Jesus

Christ: and *here* Blessed Francis became the herald and preacher of the Gospel of Christ; and he went through the towns and villages proclaiming the Gospel and Kingdom of Eternal Life to all people, not with words of human wisdom, but speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit. . . . Because of the fire of the preaching of Blessed Francis, in many men and women was kindled the love of God and they began to live in chastity and to bind themselves to do penance according to the form and doctrine and rule given by God to Blessed Francis and which he, by preaching and example, showed to the world. These men and women he called Brothers of Penance, and rightly so, for the way of Penance is for all who go to Heaven, and in this path of penitence all can walk, priests and laymen, married persons, virgins and widows, and many miracles have shown how great this Order is before God."

The accent here on the Porziuncula certainly justifies the supposition that many followers gathered round Santa Maria degli Angeli in quite the early days. Celano speaks more generally; but it seems indisputable that from the beginning of his ministry informal groups of disciples clustered round Saint Francis wherever he went. The *Actus* tells that he thought to institute the Third Order during the preaching tour which followed the decision of Saint Clare and Sylvester in regard to his own mission, that is in about 1213. It may well be that seeing the crowds thronging round him, and feeling their generous response to his words, the idea flashed into his mind of drawing them nearer to himself and uniting them in the bond of their new enthusiasm.

What could be more natural than that these groups should form the nucleus of the future Third Order? There were men and women in Florence living

according to the Franciscan ideal soon after Bernard and Giles's visit there in 1209, and Jacques de Vitry in his letters of 1216 and 1219 mentions the already large number of Saint Francis's followers. At an early date Saint Francis had himself admitted Jacopa de' Settesoli to the fraternity, also Praxedes the famous Roman recluse mentioned by Celano. Besides these there were certainly many others who had been received by Saint Francis or his immediate companions into a fellowship of evangelical life. The definite organisation of the Third Order only came several years later, and it was not indeed as a separate Order that Saint Francis first thought of it. Rather it was a way of life, a changing of values, by which all, no matter what their state or ties, should be able to form one spiritual family with the companions who had renounced everything to follow him. For several years the only rule was the Letter to all Christians written in 1213 or 1215, of which the theme is the extension of the Kingdom of God, a call to all men to live by the Gospel, a passionate exhortation to perfection. Nothing with Saint Francis was cut and dried. He did not formulate a rule and then offer it to people to live by. He excited and inspired the crowds who surrounded him with his own burning love, which touched their hearts like new sap running through the wood, and then the rule was the logical outcome of their enthusiasm.

. . . . .

The Franciscan movement among the laity offered a spiritual home to people of the most divergent gifts of mind and soul, and the great wave of popular enthusiasm brought thousands flocking to its arms. No religious order probably has ever had to deal with the problems of mass conversion as had the

companions of Saint Francis. At first there was no novitiate; the Order was open to all, and incidentally at the mercy of all. Individual cases could not be inquired into; indeed it was contrary to the nature of Saint Francis to inquire. If a man showed any desire to join the brotherhood, that was sufficient. People of all kinds pressed to be admitted to the fraternity. The birds at the Carceri had dispersed to the four corners of heaven as a sign of the growth of the Franciscan Order, and in a few short years the prophecy was abundantly fulfilled.

Saint Francis himself had foreseen it when he said: "Be gay and contented, O my friends, and do not be discouraged because we are only a few and we are all simple men. I have had a vision and saw an immense multitude of people who came towards us, and even now in my ears echoes the sound of their feet as they came and went from every part of the world. Behold, here are the French, the Spaniards, the Germans, the English in an immense multitude. At first we shall be happy to have them, but afterwards so great a concourse will bring us trouble." Difficulties and troubles there were indeed bound to be, and Saint Francis may well have felt overwhelmed for a moment when he contrasted the spiritual unity of the original twelve with all the complications he knew must arise. He could give the first inspiration, lay down the fundamental principles, but the developments of the future were beyond his control.

Before long it was evident that the first general direction given to the penitents was not sufficient; when it came to large numbers they needed a definite rule and organisation just as much as the friars. The time when the few elect could live bound only by the rule of the spirit soon passed, even as it had



passed at Rivo Torto and Santa Maria degli Angeli. Perhaps Cardinal Ugolino suggested the next step to Saint Francis. At all events together they drew up the rule of 1221, basing it upon the one given by Innocent III to the Third Order of the Umiliati. It was made public on Ascension Day 1221, in Florence, and with it the new fraternity came officially into being.

As yet the Franciscans were only known as the Order of Penance. The name Third Order in the thirteenth century implied the Umiliati, and it was only when that Order dwindled to comparative insignificance that the congregations of Penitents became generally known as the Third Order of Saint Francis. The rule formulated by Saint Francis and Cardinal Ugolino was found some years ago by M. Paul Sabatier in the Franciscan Convent of Capistrano in the Abruzzi, and it has been discussed by critics of every school; part of it undoubtedly dates from 1221, part was probably added about 1228, and rather later another clause which emphasised the Franciscan character of the fraternity. Two other copies of this rule have since been found, one in the library of Königsberg, one in the Landau Library of Florence, and the three codexes are the earliest versions we possess of the constitutions of the Third Order. Nicholas IV confirmed and revised them again in 1289; and with some modifications this is still the Tertiary rule to-day.

At first sight the rule is rather an uninspiring document, the crystallising of a sublime inspiration. It represents the attempt inevitable, and yet so difficult, to build up an organisation on what at first was a sentiment, an élan of the heart and soul, a wonderful improvisation. Through the dry legal



words which surely are Ugolino's, it is, however, still possible to recapture the shining spirit of Saint Francis. It is true that between it and the Letter to all Christians the gulf is wide, even more in form than in content. Yet without the rule the Third Order could hardly have weathered the storms to which it was exposed, and it was Cardinal Ugolino's wisdom that safeguarded the followers of Saint Francis from many a danger.

While all three Orders were in the crises of unprecedented expansion there was of necessity considerable confusion, and it is in their relation to the conditions of the thirteenth century that many clauses of the rule must be studied, especially those which deal with the constitution of the Order. At first the bond between the First and Third Orders was a close one. The rule is explicit upon this point, and it is clear that when it was issued the Third Order was considered as dependent upon the friars. Mariano of Florence declares that Saint Francis wished for the friars to have power even to modify the rule, but that the Pope, foreseeing many difficulties, refused his sanction. We know from Bernard de Besse that the Tertiary ministers in the earliest days were always Franciscans, though the bishop had the right of visitation. The whole situation was extremely delicate. The bishops found themselves involved in disputes on behalf of the Tertiaries, who often resented their attitude. This was especially the case in the south of Italy, where the power of Frederick II was strongest and some of the bishops were favourable to him. We find Pierre de la Vigne, the chancellor, complaining of the Franciscan and Dominican Tertiaries, faithful as they almost all were to the Holy See, as a real obstacle to the emperor's ambition.

The friction was almost entirely caused by the one article of the rule which laid down that the Tertiaries should only take oaths on certain restricted occasions. Those words may seem colourless now, but not so in the thirteenth century. It was a flash of genius on the part of Innocent III which had given this clause to the Umiliati, and Cardinal Ugolino repeated it for the Franciscans. At one stroke it set them free from the necessity of swearing the feudal oath, and therefore from the authority of their feudal lord, who otherwise could force them to fight for him whenever he pleased. We can hardly realise what an immense privilege this was, in an age when everyday life was hedged round by the obligations and laws of the feudal system.

The Italian commune left very little to individual liberty; indeed its power was largely founded upon the abdication of personal freedom of action. Life more often than not became a burden under the perpetual warfare of different parties and classes, and the weariness of continual feudal strife. From all this, as also from compulsory civil employment, the Tertiaries were immune, and they were further safeguarded by the stipulation that they should bear arms against no man. Later on this drastic rule was modified; but the original clause was a powerful weapon in the hands of the Church to lessen the tyranny of the feudal lords. It made each Tertiary a man of peace; and the Franciscan Third Order did noble work towards healing social dissensions and in forming a bond of unity between the cities of Italy. It was a great democratic society, with the governing principles of peace and charity, which spread over the whole peninsula.

The regulation concerning oaths and fighting at once brought the Tertiaries into conflict with the

civil authorities, and this in spite of the fact that the rule was emphatic upon other civic duties, such as the settling of debts and payment of any taxes justly due. In all the clauses of the rule dealing with the social and spiritual life of the Third Order, one fundamental point must be remembered, that the Tertiary was not merely a member of an association, but a religious, living indeed in the world, but none the less not of it. This difficult vocation, if it signified anything, meant a character built up upon supernatural virtues, and as an ideal Saint Francis set before his followers, once and for all, the standard of Christian perfection contained in the Gospels. The Franciscan values were at odds with those of society in the thirteenth century, and so they have remained until the present day. The message of Saint Francis was a challenge; the challenge of the Cross against all the wisdom of the world. That is what he stood for; and the challenge has been taken up in every time and country. All the clauses of the rule dealing with the relationship of the Franciscans to society were an attempt to bring the healing message of the Gospel into direct contact with social life; it was the practical application of the motto *Pax et bonum*, and though conditions change, that surely is the mission of every Franciscan throughout the world.

Such a mission was only possible if it sprang from a rich inner life based upon deep spiritual experience, and on this the rule lays ample stress. What more luminous example, moreover, could the Tertiary have than the spirituality of Saint Francis himself, which was so beautiful an instance of the highest contemplative powers growing together with loving service of his fellow-men?

Such were the beginnings of the Franciscan Third Order, which not only conquered the other lay fraternities of the thirteenth century, but became the model for many other associations. Saint Francis offered the devout laity the evangelical life they wished for, inside the Church, and not outside it. That was his enormous gift to his own generation, and the Franciscan movement was the most effectual of crusades against the heretical sects. Upon the stable basis that he gave, the Order of Penance has been able to grow and expand according to the needs of different times. External changes and modifications come and go, but the fundamental principle is the same and never ages.

In the general life of the Third Order there have naturally been moments of oscillation and development. In 1397 Blessed Angelina Corbara<sup>1</sup> founded the first convent for cloistered nuns of the Third Order, and in 1510 Leo X approved a rule for the regular Tertiaries living in a community. It might appear at first as though this enclosing of part of the Third Order was a departure from the original intention of Saint Francis. Certainly he seems to have thought above all of homes sanctified, and lives in the world made beautiful by his spirit. That ideal has always remained, but side by side with it there has grown up the cloistered Third Order as an inevitable outcome of the general movement.

Even during the early days such spirits as Blessed Angela of Foligno or Saint Margaret of Cortona drew apart and lived with a small group of followers. As the claims of the world increased during the Renaissance, so did the desire for the shelter of the cloister, and the more complete dedication of the three vows

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent account of the life of Blessed Angelina Corbara see Contessa Maria Luisa Fiumis *Mistiche Umbre*.

of religion. Many perhaps who were not fitted for the First or Second Order yet felt themselves called to a conventual life, and that need could only be filled by the enclosed Third Order.

Innumerable branches of it have arisen and are still arising in every part of the world, carrying on every kind of work. The Third Order has yet other offshoots, such as the Orsoline of Sant' Angela Merici, the Oblates of Santa Francesca Romana, and we may remember that San Filippo Neri and Saint Vincent de Paul are among the founders who began their religious careers as Franciscan Tertiaries.

. . . . .

The secular Third Order likewise has varied with passing times. The tremendous success during the two centuries following the death of the Seraphic Father was followed by a time of relative depression. In northern countries the Reformation extinguished many Tertiary congregations, and those that remained were driven back into themselves. During the French Revolution the Third Order suffered with the other religious bodies. Joseph II, the friend of Voltaire, opposed it strongly in Austria, and Napoleon, when he found its peaceful spirit inconvenient, suppressed it as dangerous to society. The Tertiary life of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was almost entirely concentrated within the walls of the regular Third Order. The secular Tertiaries through so many persecutions found their scope and influence greatly reduced, and under such conditions the guild spirit necessarily became more pronounced. That spirit can never be looked upon as the Franciscan ideal, and it has not ever been the characteristic of the Tertiary saint. It was only the inevitable result of external transitory circumstances. The secular



Third Order must be in active touch with the outside world to fulfil its mission. No form of social need must turn to it in vain. If its members are apathetic to what surrounds them, they miss the Franciscan spirit. In the mission field the Third Order has always shone, and, no matter on which continent, there are abundant opportunities to-day in countless directions for the individual Tertiary as for the Third Order collectively. Each and all are responsible for taking up the challenge of their founder.

It is almost impossible to begin to estimate the influence of the secular Third Order, for it has filtered into every phase of life. It has profoundly affected art; it has touched science and politics; and a man like the late Monsieur Léon Harmel has shown that the Franciscan spirit can solve many a problem in the modern industrial world. In the roll of members of the Third Order many are famous: Dante, Giotto, Petrarch, Lucrezia Borgia, Raphael, Murillo, Vasco da Gama, Columbus, Galileo, Cervantes, Calderon, Charles V, Tasso, Palestrina, Paisiello, Galvani, Volta, Coventry Patmore, Liszt, are among the names often quoted, though definite historical proof is lacking in many cases; but besides those who have shone in any special way there is the multitude of sons and daughters of Saint Francis who have carried and are carrying on the inspiration that he gave seven centuries ago. We see that inspiration triumph, above all, in the lives of the Franciscan saints and martyrs who have shown us what the Franciscan vocation can mean. They show it to us from many different angles, and we turn to them, not to read fine or moving stories, but to learn to know great men and women who by the grace of God have lived great lives and can transmit to us some of their power.

Does the Third Order appear as an anomaly in

the modern world? Surely only to those who do not know its history and the unchanging needs of humanity. When Rome fell before the Italian troops in 1870, Pius IX could rejoice that the loss of temporal power made him a truer son of Saint Francis. Leo X, recognising all the possibilities of the Third Order in Christian society, modified the ancient rule, adapting it to modern needs. During the nineteenth century, indeed, the pendulum swung back; many Tertiary congregations were re-established, and new life flowed into the channels of the secular Third Order. The Tertiary congresses in different countries showed their members the many opportunities of the Third Order in relation to society. For the spirit of the Letter to all Christians is still alive to-day. What the Third Order can be, Pius X told us in his memorable letter, *Tertius Franciscum Ordinem*, which recalled the Tertiaries to the fervour of their original vocation. While the horror of the Great War hung heavy upon the world, Benedict XV, in his encyclical *Sacra Propediem* in 1921 for the seventh centenary of the founding of the Third Order, again sounded the note of peace, that inner and outer peace which is the duty and privilege of every Tertiary. Only three years ago, Pius XI, in his encyclical for the Franciscan centenary, urged again all that his predecessors had said, and reminded the members of the Third Order that they were soldiers, nay knights in the army which is fighting to win the world for Christ the King. And that surely is but the repetition of Saint Francis's own words and the dearest wish of his heart.





## CHAPTER II

BLESSED ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

1248-1309

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## BLESSED ANGELA OF FOLIGNO

*One torch lights another.*

By the time Saint Francis died the Third Order had spread over nearly the whole of Italy and beyond the Alps. There was a spiritual romance in the Franciscan vocation which could transcend the suffering and misery of human life, a sublime simplicity which could overcome all difficulties, and a liberty which knew no bounds. It was the particular atmosphere of joyous freedom which made many people feel that here was the way of life for which they had been waiting, and the practical spirituality of the rule made it not only the Order of Penance but also that of Joy. All too often the Franciscan ideal has been confused with a vague picturesqueness and poetical romanticism, but no conception could be more false. The preaching to the birds was a charming incident, and the love of all God's creatures his beautiful characteristic; but Saint Francis was also the penitent, who knew the folly of the Cross and whose whole being had received its seal. This double spirit of sorrow and joy is, moreover, reflected in all his great followers.

It is not surprising that during the early years of its existence the Third Order shone with numerous examples of holiness. Blessed Lucchesio and his wife Bonadonna are commonly known as the first Tertiary Beati, but they had many companions in their heroic voluntary poverty and devotion. The most beautiful example of the life of penance and

unquenchable charity is of course Saint Elizabeth of Hungary (1207-31), the Patroness of the Third Order. Who does not know her legend? Her short life was full of human trials and sorrows, conquered by a love as burning as that of Saint Francis himself. She became poor among the poor, did penance for others' sins in a radiant spirit of generosity, while to the last she spent herself nursing the most repulsive forms of misery and degradation.

As Saint Francis had eagerly served the lepers at Rivo Torto, so his followers sought out all the most miserable and suffering, and the brothers and sisters of the Order of Penance were indeed servants of love. There were others, however, who looked to Saint Francis the contemplative rather than to the active apostle. They saw him living in retirement at one of the hermitages, or in the solitude of La Verna, where, according to Celano's fine phrase, he became "Non tam orans, quam oratio factus," and him they rightly aspired to follow. Moreover Saint Francis had himself provided special rules for those of his disciples who wished to embrace a life of prayer apart from the others, and thus the hermit vocation was fully justified as part of the Franciscan call.<sup>1</sup>

In those early Franciscan communities there was not only a spirit of active charity, but a strong leaning to the contemplative life. Holy souls like Blessed John of La Verna, or Blessed Conrad of Offida, could not have led or organised the Order, nor were they called upon to do so, but their lives of prayer and penance had an immense influence on its development.

Through contemporary records we catch glimpses of many others, such as Blessed Nuvolone, the cobbler

<sup>1</sup> *De Religiosa habitatione in Eremo*, opusc. ed. Lemmens.

of Faenza, who gave away all his earnings and was renowned for his lengthy pilgrimages to distant shrines. Blessed Giovanna da Signa, Blessed Torello da Poppi, and Santa Verdiana of Castelfiorentino were Franciscan hermits for upwards of thirty years. There were also Blessed Pier Pettignano, whose gift of prayer was celebrated by Dante, the mysterious Cecilia of Florence, the mistress of Ubertino da Casale in the higher contemplation of the life of Christ, and the pathetic Blessed Umiliana dei Cerchi who did so much to spread the Franciscan message among the Florentines. And this is to mention but a few.

The First Companions of Saint Francis were still alive, Bernard, Angelo, Rufino, Leo, Masseo, Illuminato, Silvestro, and Egidio, living mostly in retirement, and it is not difficult to imagine the veneration in which they were held. Better than anyone they could tell the sublime significance of the Franciscan message as they had heard it at Rivo Torto and the Porziuncula, and their mere presence must have lent a peculiar fervour and mystical atmosphere to the Umbrian fraternities. How natural, therefore, that the greatest contemplative of the Order, Blessed Angela of Foligno, should have appeared in their midst.

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Franciscan mysticism has never found a greater exponent than this woman, and her influence has travelled far and wide and is still strong among us to-day.

Blessed Angela's revelations, moreover, came at a critical moment. Many of the followers of the Abbot Joachim da Flores were in close touch with the Franciscans, some had joined the Order. His

prophetic books had been removed to the Franciscan convent at Pisa, and restless spirits bewildered themselves with conjectures and interpretations of his prophecies, while discontented ones often sheltered their own spiritual pride behind his apocalyptic visions. Not satisfied with the Gospel as preached by Saint Francis, they advanced the most absurd pretensions and theories on behalf of the Everlasting Gospel, as it came to be called. All forgetful of him who had so repeatedly enjoined reverence and obedience to the Church on his disciples, they clamoured for an age of liberty when popes and priests and sacraments should be no more. It was the old trouble of the Cathari coming up again. Joachimism at its worst was responsible for the horrible distortions of the message of Saint Francis as seen in the Fraticelli and Zealots, and unfortunately some of the most spiritual natures amongst the Franciscans were led away into a maze of undisciplined mysticism which could only be a danger to themselves and the whole Order. Their mystical speculations were not the seeds of new life; they did not communicate to others new ardour, strength, and courage; did not offer to succeeding generations an enlarged vision or deeper consciousness of God.

To these Blessed Angela affords a striking contrast. She must be numbered amongst the greatest of Catholic mystics of the highest contemplative and creative type. Her spiritual experience was strikingly complete, and it was won by an unrelenting battle against her natural inclinations. Hers was an intensely dynamic nature, and we can feel in her the opposing currents, the difficult adjustments of a rich complex personality. One of the many heretical sects of Umbria, the Brothers of the Free Spirit, maintained that man should live free of all



desire, to whom Angela, then an elderly woman, retorted that such an assertion was completely false. Man, as God has created him, lives by desire, and Angela's desire was concentrated upon God, and upon conforming her own life to the pattern life of Christ. There was no touch of passivity in her, or of quietism even in her final enjoyment of Divine Union. Fruition and action were to her two closely connected states, and she turns from her highest vision to live the unitive life day by day and to teach others to follow her. She fully earned the title of Mistress of Theologians, and her mission in the spiritual life seems constantly to increase and her message to unfold.

Like Saint Teresa, Saint Ignatius, or Saint Francis of Sales, she belongs to the great teachers and her doctrine is all in one magnificent book: *Liber sororis Lelle de Fulgineo ordinis continentium sine postibus. Cujus principium est Vere fidelium experientia probat.* Thus runs its title in the inventory dated 1381 at the library of the Sacro Convento in Assisi, and it is this manuscript that the Père Ferré has given us in the complete Latin text and French translation, and compiled a valuable chronology of Angela's life. Other manuscripts and editions exist, but it is from this one especially that we can perhaps seize something of the extraordinary human being whose spiritual experience is here recorded.

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She was born of wealthy parents in 1248, twenty years after the canonisation of Saint Francis, and she was therefore roughly the contemporary of Saint Bonaventure, Saint Margaret of Cortona, and Jacopone da Todi. During her youth Umbria rang with the message of Saint Francis, and she lived among

people who must have heard and seen and known him. She practised a conventional piety, but for years Angela was a gay, pleasure-loving, tolerant, cultivated woman of the world, and nothing more. Yet she liked to be thought religious, and though her later self-accusations were probably exaggerated, we can see that there was some truth in the statement that she was "vain and egoistic, painted in false colours, a dissembler within and without," for such is the judgment of Angela the saint upon her former self.

We do not know the exact circumstances of her conversion, but there is no mention of a sudden onslaught as in the case of Jacopone. Angela's marriage had not been happy, and hers was a nature needing love above all things. Love was the ruling theme of her life. She knew all its delights and dangers, and in her later warnings to her disciples we hear the voice of someone who had only reached the highest love by a long steep road and after many falls.

In 1285 her husband, mother, and children were all living, but their lives seem to have been both empty and frivolous, and she grew more and more dissatisfied. She was disgusted with her surroundings and above all with herself. Slowly her spiritual sense strove to assert itself, she began to consider her sins, she was in terror of being damned and "wept bitterly." Such is the first of the thirty steps in which Angela told of her conversion, and it is the foundation of them all. Her conscience was stirred, and she begged Saint Francis to send her a confessor. He appeared to her promising her that her prayer was heard, and the next day in the cathedral she met her cousin Fra Arnaldo, to whom she made a general confession of her life.

Fra Arnaldo for about the next ten years was Angela's director, guide, and secretary, and no position could have been more difficult. He was harassed by his penitent, whose mystical powers he could not follow, harassed by his own conscientious desire to write her words down with absolute precision, harassed by the notoriety he found forced upon him, and which brought him severe reprimands from his superiors. At one time he was forbidden to see her. He wrote hurriedly first of all on odd scraps of paper; their interviews were constantly interrupted, once because the sacristan wished to shut the church where they were. The book of Sister Lella was produced under the greatest human difficulties. After Fra Arnaldo laid down the pen, at least two other friars took it up, like him translating into Latin as best they could, the Italian that fell from Angela's lips. Finally, others added certain portions, which though they represent her thought, do not reproduce her words. It is to these intermediaries, above all to Fra Arnaldo, that we owe this vivid autobiography and record of the spiritual life.

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After her confession Angela resolved to lead a new life, but all was dark and comfortless in her soul, and she emphasises the fact that her conversion was the result of will, not of sentiment. She only caught glimpses of the Divine Mercy as rifts in the cloud that oppressed her. She realised, moreover, that in offending the Creator she had also offended and harmed all His creatures. "With an overwhelming sense of human solidarity she prays them not to accuse her to God," she asks of Our Lady and the saints to intercede for her, and feels at last that all turn to her in compassion and love. Then in the midst of her

misery her thoughts turn to the Cross, to all that Christ had suffered for her. Tremblingly she offers herself to Him, and sees the way of the Cross opening before her.

The next five or six years were very difficult ones for Angela. It needed heroic courage for a middle-aged woman of her position to give up all the comforts and refinements of life, and she tells of the effort it meant to even change her way of dressing. Her husband, her relations and friends made everything exceedingly hard, and she, self-conscious and sensitive, had to bear their reproaches, above all, their amusement, as best she could.

Her mother was particularly unsympathetic, and Angela says quite openly that when the whole family died, one after another, it was a relief to her. The wording of this paragraph has often been quoted against her, but it must be remembered that at the time she was tossed and tormented by the awakening of tremendous spiritual powers which had hitherto lain dormant. Her reaction was bound to be violent. Every human tie seemed to her a danger and hindrance in the path of the soul, not a God-given gift capable of sublime sanctification.

With her first sight of the way of the Cross had come the realisation that she must follow it unencumbered, and that her material possessions, earthly loves, and personal desires, her whole self, must all be sacrificed.

Such had been the poverty sung by Jacopone, and Angela must surely have known his words:

*Dio non alberga in core stretto, tant' è grande, quant' hai affetto  
Povertà ha sì gran petto, che ci alberga Deitate*

*Povertà è nulla avere e nulla cosa poi volere,  
Ed omne cosa possedere in spirito di libertate.*

This is poverty indeed, if it is to be a living experience and not a mere pious sentiment. Like many another, Angela recoiled before it, but the vision of the Cross took increasing possession of her, and she seemed to stand beneath it with Our Lady and Saint John. Her resolution strengthened, but still she was held back. "How slowly the soul moves to penitence, how heavy are the chains of the world!" she exclaims, and sets out on a pilgrimage to Rome to beg the grace of true poverty from Saint Peter. She gradually sold all her property, even the country house which she evidently loved, and distributed the money among the poor. Her friends, we may be sure, were lavish with advice and counsels of prudence, but "*le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas*," and no half-measures could now satisfy her. An increasing sense of God gave her the courage she needed.

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Early in 1291 she entered the Third Order, and soon afterwards she made her first famous visit to the tomb of Saint Francis. She had with her a few friends, and as they entered the church for the second time Angela fell on her knees in ecstasy, uttering unintelligible cries, quite unconscious of her surroundings. The friars hastened to see what was the matter, and with them Fra Arnaldo, who tells us that he was so ashamed of the commotion caused by his cousin and penitent, that his only feeling was of anger. Afterwards, when he heard the whole story, he first of all thought her demented, and only slowly became convinced that something quite different from ordinary madness had seized her. For Angela told him how, as they came up the narrow road which leads from Spello to Assisi, she



was praying for the grace to lead the life of a true follower of Saint Francis. Suddenly she felt within her the presence of the Spirit of God, and heard the words: "I will bear thee company and speak with thee all the way, . . . I will make no end of speaking, and thou wilt not be able to attend to aught but me. . . . My daughter who art sweet to me, who art my beloved and my temple, do thou love me, for I love thee greatly and much more than thou lovest me. . . . Thou didst pray to my servant Francis. He loved me greatly and therefore I accomplished great things in him. If any soul loved me more than he, in her I would do still more." Fearing an illusion she tried to distract her attention by looking round at the vineyards, but wherever she turned the inner voice said: "This too is my creature," and "If the whole world came to thee now, thou couldst not speak to it, for it is the whole world which is within thee." Angela, thinking of her own sins, was plunged into a new humility; she listened while the Spirit told her of all that He had suffered for her, her soul filled with overwhelming sweetness and certainty and joy. This state lasted through the first visit to the church, but when she returned a second time, still held in this close embrace of the Spirit, she heard the Spirit say: "Now, my sweet daughter and temple, is the moment when I shall accomplish what I said, and under the form of this consolation I leave thee, but know that I shall never leave thee if thou lovest me."

When Fra Arnaldo asked Angela what she saw at that instant, she said: "I saw something perfect, an immense majesty which I cannot describe, but which seemed to me the Highest Good. It said many sweet words to me as it withdrew slowly, evenly, with immense sweetness." And Angela, left to



herself, could only fall to the ground, crying: "O Love unknown, why hast Thou left me? Why, why, why?" "I cried," she said afterwards, "because I wished to die and it was great sorrow to me to have to live."

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Angela returned to Foligno another woman; and from this time onwards until her death eighteen years later she was led through every phase of mystical experience. She lived first of all in comparative solitude with only one or two companions, but gradually other Tertiaries gathered round her. They devoted themselves to works of charity in the local hospital and especially among the lepers. They lived a life of penance, surely rigorous even to medieval ideas. All penance seemed to Angela small compared with sin and the Love it had offended. Penance to her was not a matter of a month or a year, but a lifetime, the natural result of spiritual awakening. She would say to her followers: "In proportion to your strength God wishes you to do penance all your lives. If you live one day, do penitence for a day; if you live an hour, do penitence for an hour; if you live longer, then do penitence longer." And this was the rule she lived by.

Besides her own chosen penitence, she was often tormented spiritually in the most grievous way. Supersensitive, she endured temptations unknown in the past, she felt her whole being immersed in vice, in body and mind she seemed a prey of the power of evil. She was continually ill; indeed her physical constitution must have been robust to stand such a strain so long. As in the case of Saint Catherine of Genoa, however, her ecstasies were often a source of bodily strength; from them she received new strength, her energy was increased, and her face so transfigured

and shining that one of her companions complained of the attention they attracted in the streets while the supernatural radiance was upon her.

Angela returned several times to Assisi, and received some of her greatest revelations in the Porziuncula. Otherwise she never left Foligno, and it was there that Ubertino da Casale came to visit her. She was the intimate friend of some of the most prominent members of the spiritual party, and her convert life was spent among the disciples of the First Companions. In their midst she found the atmosphere of prayer and contemplation she needed, and to them she owed a great deal of her spiritual balance.

Few other mystics combine so ecstatic a flight with such joyful simplicity. By nature Angela was inclined to the philosophical and metaphysical attitude of the neo-Platonists, and she is completely at home in the most transcendental spheres, soaring far above the things of sense and human understanding. Only too easily she might have lost touch with the spiritual realities which are so near the earth. That she did not do so is largely thanks to the Franciscan tradition. The sublime spirituality of Saint Francis was that of the Gospel, and one of his most characteristic acts was instituting the Presepio of Greccio, which through seven hundred years has renewed the Christmas story for millions of human beings. The spirit of the Gospel radiated from Saint Francis and his first disciples, and in its light Angela's mystical powers awakened and developed.

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She had responded to the supernatural call with all the enthusiasm of her great nature. Turning to

the spiritual life as she did when no longer young, she gave herself up to it with the generosity of a person capable only of the all or none reaction, and hers was both an exceptional temperament and a special vocation. She was moreover guarded perhaps by the fact that she was a woman, from letting her spiritual powers expend themselves upon the internal differences of the Franciscan Order.

She makes but few direct references to the questions then agitating the Order. No one was a greater lover of Poverty than Angela, or desired it more, as is shown in her splendid letters to her disciples, but she never advocated the uncompromising ideas of some of the zealots. She always emphasised the spiritual rather than the material point of view.

In spite of her rapidly increasing powers of mystical contemplation, Angela evidently did not feel the need, which might have seemed so natural, to join the Poor Ladies. In one sense hers was a wider vocation. Great powers of self-expression accompanied her extraordinary spiritual gifts; she became the centre of a group of ardent disciples drawn to her by the "splendour of her radiant virtue," and through them her influence radiated out into the world beyond.

She received every grace, not only for herself but for others, and once she heard these words: "I who speak to thee am the Divine Power and I bring thee a grace, which is that I wish thee to be of profit to all who shall see thee; still more, for I will that thou shalt help and be of use to all who think of thee or hear thy name. The more a soul possesses Me, the more then it shall be profited by thee." This until her death was Angela's mission. The inmost secret of a soul's apprehension of God can never be repeated in human language, but all that could be transmitted

she gave without stint for the enlightenment of her spiritual sons and daughters. Often she complains of the insufficiency of Fra Arnaldo's words; sometimes the glory of her vision was far beyond her own power to describe. "Before the Divine Goodness all words are as a grain of millet seed in comparison with the universe," she declares, and "of these excellent and divine workings in the soul whereby God does manifest Himself man can in no wise speak or even stammer." It is the complaint of Dante, the cry of every soul which tries to tell the secrets of its deepest intuition.

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We come now to Angela's doctrine; her message to us. It is scattered throughout her writings, in which one looks in vain for doctrinal or biographical sequence. Probably, as the Abbé Ferré has suggested, the order is, if anything, chronological. This very confusion makes it all the more living, for it is not a book of devotion carefully edited and compiled, but a book of experience in which human details are noted down beside the highest spiritual truth.

Angela's inner life stands before us in all its intensity and power, and she is a sure guide in every phase of the spiritual life. She answers indeed to a double need of the human soul in her double apprehension of God. She perceives Him as the Absolute Reality, the Universal Life, and Immovable Wisdom, into the sea of whose Infinite Being man can empty his little personality, and find that rest for which he is ever seeking. She perceives Him, however, not only as transcendent but immanent, a personal Father to each created thing. She sees God as Justice, Wisdom, Power, Love, Beauty, and Truth; she sees and understands in a way which she can only describe "as an abyss in which the truth opened

before me straight as a road, and upon this road passed all those who went towards God, and those others who were turning away from Him."

Angela sees the Divine Power upholding all things, and she tells us that "I saw a fullness in God in which I embraced the whole universe, above and beyond the seas, the abyss, the ocean, and everything. In all these things I saw only the Divine Power and I saw it in a way impossible to describe. Then my soul could not contain itself for marvelling and cried out: 'This world is full of God.' And I understood how small is the world, above and beyond the seas, the abyss, the ocean, and everything, and how the power of God fills and overflows all."

"The whole world is full of God." What is this but the attitude of Saint Francis summed up in seven words, and no conception of creation could be more complete. In the Divine Wisdom and Justice she sees every creature, good and bad, as a servant of the glory of God, and finds the solution of every problem of good and evil, of the creation, and the salvation of man.

To Angela everything presents itself in contrasts which complete one another. The absolute, unapproachable Divinity, and God, immanent in His creation; the abyss of Holiness and that of sin; the abyss of Humility, and that of power, of Love, and suffering; of God who is All, and everything else nothing; all the contrast contained in that cry of Saint Francis: "My God, who art Thou, my most sweet Lord, and what am I, Thy miserable servant?"

This cry is shown by Angela as the foundation and centre of all spiritual life. She develops it with great eloquence, forcing her disciples to open their eyes to this double abyss of knowledge of God and of themselves. This is the way of spiritual poverty,



greatest of blessings, the way of humility and truth, by which alone the soul can truly know God, love and serve Him. It is the one safeguard against pride, false knowledge, false love; and to the soul who truly follows it, God surely reveals Himself dwelling within her. "O my sons," exclaims Angela, "every vision, every revelation, every sweetness, all sentiment, knowledge, elevation, and contemplation is useless if man has not the knowledge of God and of himself!" This is indeed the abyss of wisdom by which the soul is prepared for the abyss of Love.

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Divine Love was revealed to Angela's soul, she tells us, in a vivid colour unlike any she had ever seen. "I saw the beginning but not the end, for it is a continuing without end. I saw my soul divided as it were by a road. On one side I saw only love and all that is good, which came from God and not from me; on the other I saw myself arid and that from me came nothing good. By this I saw that it was not I who loved, although I was transformed in love, but that it came only from God. Then the two parts reunited and this union gave me a much greater and more ardent love. . . . It seemed to me that there could be no love greater or sweeter than this, and so I believed until another love was given me, the love which takes all, annihilates all, love so extreme that it is like death."

The final experience of Love came to Angela, as to other great mystics, as an all-revealing darkness in which her soul was exalted to see God as she had never done before. "In this vision my soul was raised, and I saw God in a clearness and fullness that I had never before seen. I no longer saw Love. It was then that I lost the love I had, and became



non-loving. After that I saw God in a darkness, and all was dark because it was a good too great to be imagined or understood, and all that can be thought of or seized by the understanding does not reach or even approach it. Then my soul was given a sure faith, a firm and certain hope, a continual certitude of God which took from me all fear. I was gathered into the good within the darkness. I became so sure of God that never could I doubt Him, never doubt that I possess Him. In this dark good, which is essentially active, all my hope is henceforth concentrated."

Fra Arnaldo wanted more details, his questions striving to bridge the distance between Angela and himself. At first she did not hear, but after a time could say: "My soul was ravished in a state where I tasted unspeakable joy. I knew all that I wished to know, I possessed all that I could desire—I saw all good. . . . My soul sees nothing that the tongue or heart could tell. I see all and absolutely nothing. My hope is no longer in any of the good things that can be described or imagined. I have placed it in this secret good, very secret and hidden, that I understand in this great darkness. . . . Everything is inferior to this secret Good, because the Good that I see in the darkness is the whole, and all other things are but parts."

This great darkness only came to Angela three times, and she quotes it as her supreme spiritual experience. Often in a lesser darkness she was conscious of the Blessed Trinity, and of herself at rest in God; but then she felt her own soul as a living being, able to respond, to love, to act. The joy of the Humanity of Our Lord was with her almost continually, drawing her to Himself and saying: "Thou art Me and I am thee"; and Angela continues:

"I see His Eyes full of love, and He embraces my soul and holds it fast. And the joy and good which emanate from those Eyes and that Face is the same Good that I saw interiorly in the darkness, that Good which fills me with joy beyond all words."

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From this simple and ineffable experience of God, which is at once the goal and starting-point of the spirit, sprang all Angela's truly Catholic religion. She touched the highest point that a soul on earth can attain, and at one stroke she sweeps back our narrow horizon. She carries us out with her on to the ocean of contemplation, for surely the fire which burns in the great mystical lovers of God exists, if only as a tiny spark, in every unsatisfied human heart.

Had Angela's mystical life however been limited to the transcendent spheres of her highest revelations she would have remained remote from the ordinary run of Christians. Where she is so great is in her power to bring her vision, and the teaching it implies, into the practical round of daily life. Patiently she shows her disciples each step of the road of prayer they are to follow. She tells them of the three grades of prayer, vocal, mental, and the prayer of contemplation; and first of all she warns them never to abandon vocal prayer for something they think higher, "For when once I did so, I found myself overcome by sleep and laziness, and only wasted my time. . . . Moreover, it is an acceptable thing to God if you pray and are zealous in good works when grace illuminates you, and love burns within you; but O, my sons, it is more acceptable still to God if when you feel nothing you continue to pray and seek after all good."

For every grace they are to pray unceasingly; and

the "easiest means of obtaining of God His light and grace is a devout, humble, continual, and violent prayer. By this I do not mean a prayer only of the mouth, but of the spirit and heart and all the power of the soul and body.

"Nothing is necessary to us but God. To find Him we must concentrate our soul in Him. That the spirit may be more recollected it is necessary to curtail outside relationships, too great familiarity, useless speech, love of novelty. In short, we must separate our spirit from that which distracts it, and make it enter into itself that it may know the depth of its own lowliness. It is prayer which teaches this to the soul and causes it to increase in love.

"There are three degrees of transformation of a soul in love. The first is to be wholly united to the Will of God. This seems to me the way He has shown us of poverty, sorrow, lowliness, and true obedience; and when the soul gives herself up entirely to these she is strong against vice and temptation.

"The second degree is when the soul ardently desires to become herself like her Beloved, and wishes to love all creatures with a rightful love. God then gives her a sure stability, for the nearer a soul is to God the less she is subject to change.

"The third degree is when the soul is completely transformed into God. She is then free of temptation, because she no longer dwells in herself but in God. I pray thee, my son, never give thyself to any creature but only entirely to God thy Creator. Then God increases in the soul the capacity of union with Himself, until she can contain not that which she desires to receive, but that which He desires to give her."

Perfect love is when the soul is brought to the

vision of the Divine Being, and in this she sees how every creature has its being from Him the Supreme Being, and outside of Him nothing can be. In this vision the soul obtains an admirable wisdom and is excited to new love. She learns to love all living things, both reasonable and unreasonable, for love of Him. . . . And when she sees the Supreme Being incline in love to His creatures she also desires to love them as they are loved by Him. . . .

God Incarnate, our Creator, the Sovereign Good is all love. He loves us with His whole Being and He wishes for a like love. . . . The soul which desires to be raised to this perfect love must give herself up to God and not serve Him in view of any reward, but for Himself. Knowing God in His truth, the soul understands that He is the Perfect Good. Seeing this, she loves Him; loving Him, she desires to possess Him, and gives all that she has, her whole self, that she may arrive at this possession. Then the soul tastes His Sweetness; and possessing, feeling, tasting God, she holds Him with an incomparable joy. . . . This love has the power to transform the lover in the Beloved. As the iron in the fire takes on the form, colour, heat, and virtue of the flame and becomes itself like unto the flame, and this because it is entirely given over to the fire, so the soul united to and with God in the perfect fire of Divine Love gives herself entirely to God and is transformed into Him without losing her own substance. She then transforms her whole life in this love of God, and by love it becomes almost divine. Knowledge must come first, then love, to transform the lover in the Beloved. . . . This knowledge and love cannot be given to the soul by any creature; it comes only from the Divine Light and is a special gift from God.

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This love of God can never be idle. Action is the sign and measure of love, and those who have been raised by the way of the Cross to this vision of the uncreated love will find peace in virtue and good works; their love will constantly be increased, and will urge them on to ever purer actions.

Those who do not live in the spirit of truth, make idols of their virtues and good works, and their first idol is the Divine Light which has been given them.

Here is the sign of true love: that he who loves does not transform a part, but all of himself in his Beloved. Because this transformation is not continuous, the soul is filled with a desire to find all the means by which she may be transformed in the will of the Beloved, that thus she may regain her vision. She seeks henceforth only for that which her Beloved loves. Continual prayer illumines the soul, raises and transforms her; illumined by the light which can only be perceived in prayer, the soul sees clearly the way of Christ prepared and trodden by the Feet of the Crucified One, and she runs to it with a joyful heart, and rises above herself to the power of Divine Sweetness. Prayer finds all in the contemplation of the Cross. . . .

If, therefore, thou wishest to be supernaturally illumined and taught, read in the book of the life of Christ; and the more thou prayest the more thou wilt be enlightened, the more perfect and profound thy vision will become; and the more thou lovest the greater joy thou shalt find. Then thou wilt come to the fullness of light, because thou wilt understand that it passes thy comprehension.

The Son of God Himself has given us the example of prayer and taught us to persevere therein. Jesus prayed, that seeing His example we might love prayer



above all things. Place Christ before thee, and strive to obtain something of that prayer, for He prayed not for Himself, but for thee. Christ always preferred the Divine Will to His own, and do thou imitate Him. All Christ's life was a prayer, and without prayer thou canst do nothing.

We have also the example of the Mother of God. Do we think her continual prayer was useless? Rather let us follow what she has taught us in her most holy prayer and contemplation of the vision of God.

In all this, too, we must tread in the steps of our glorious father Saint Francis. He has shown us how to concentrate ourselves in God; and because the Holy Spirit permeated all his works and actions he was sanctified in body and soul. I see in him a perfect lover and follower after poverty, for when the soul has seen the infinity of God, and then the vile beings with which He has deigned to contract the bonds of love, she is then more deeply moved by the sufferings of the Incarnate God Jesus Christ. The divine light which shines in the Life of Christ has taught me that the sorrows of Christ are the road by which the soul may reach God and rest in Him, and that the road trodden by Christ the Head is also that for all the members of His mystical Body.

“Let us therefore seek in all things to make ourselves like Him who made Himself like us down to taking on Himself all our misery. . . . O ineffable Love of God above all others! by it God has become man to unite me to Himself . . . O Incomprehensible! for me Thou art made comprehensible; O Thou Uncreated! for me Thou art become a creature; O Thou whom no thought can reach! Thou hast become the light of my mind; Pure Spirit, Thou hast taken a body for me to touch. O Lord, make me



worthy to see the depth of Thy immense Love in Thy most holy Incarnation."

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In this love Angela sees the separate mysteries of the Incarnation, the Nativity, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Our Lord, signs of the infinite Love extending between the two poles of our creation and redemption. She dwells tenderly on the episodes of the human life of Christ, especially upon the two favourite Franciscan themes of the Passion and Poverty.

Both are intimately united in Angela's spiritual life. Poverty is the first and greatest of all virtues, and far transcends any giving up of earthly possessions. The worst poverty is ignorance, she warns her followers: ignorance of God's greatness and ignorance of man's nothingness; and true poverty is twin-sister to humility and to charity. The material poverty of Christ was but the outer garment of that Divine love-impelled poverty of spirit that consented to every limitation of power, to every temptation; consented to be at the mercy of men and of all the conditions of human life.

Christ accepted to appear before the world as the Friend of the fallen and ignorant; and His poverty opens such vast horizons of humility that the human mind reels before them. "Oh, if only this unequalled and invincible humility could confound and annihilate the pride of our nothing! Oh, the immensity of our folly that after seeing the Poverty of Christ we should still aspire to position and dignities, to possessions and riches! The Author of all life became obedient to His creatures, even to the inanimate ones, in order to give back that life to thee who wast dead to divine things. Thou didst ignore it all,

O man, and He, deserted by all, loved thee with the truest love, and died to open to thee the way of perfection. The spear should have bent, and He could have caused it to do so, sooner than pierce that sacred Side, and so all other creatures could and should have refused to work against their Creator. But He willed to submit to their power." Angela perpetually returns to the practice of this virtue which, rightly understood, unites man's individual will to the Will of God. Perforce it destroys pride, or self-will, or uncharitableness, and she makes it the spiritual foundation of daily life.

Poverty leaped like a bride to the Cross with Christ, she who with sorrow had been His daily companion since His birth. From the first moment He had foreseen and suffered and accepted all, and only the sorrows of Christ equalled His love. The exterior sufferings inflicted on Him by men were but the veil of that mystery which none can penetrate, and Angela can but exclaim: "If anyone should be able to speak of the Passion of Christ I would say to him: 'Thou must be He who suffered it.'"

With her usual devotion to the Blessed Virgin she turns to her with a beautiful prayer: "Holy Mary, Mother of Sorrow, tell me something of the passion of thy Blessed Son of God, for thou didst feel it more than any saint because of thy boundless love. Thou didst see it both with the eyes of the body and of the soul, for he sees most who loves most."

Angela realised that the Passion of Christ is as profound a mystery as the Divine Being. Along with the purely interior experience of God revealed in the darkness, through all her last years she lived in an almost continual visionary state. In this she saw the many details of the Passion, especially of the inner hidden agony of Christ. She suffered herself

acutely and perpetually for what she felt as her own personal share in His death, and all her life her tears of contrition were never dried. Yet with them came that joy of love which even the thought of the Passion could not cloud, and the way of the Cross became the way of hope and light for herself and for all other sinners.

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In the revelations concerning the Passion there came to Angela an ever-growing insight into the mystery of the Eucharist. For the last eighteen years of her life it was her daily food and strength, and many of her visions are directly connected with it. She saw Our Lord often in the Host under many different forms, and she was intensely conscious of the wonderful communion of saints in the living Christ. The Blessed Sacrament is the supreme proof of the Love of God, and in it man is drawn away from all creatures, from himself, and directly united to God. Its power, moreover, reaches beyond the bounds of this world, and Angela sees the saints and angels rejoicing in the Sacrament which is the means of union between Christ the Head and each one of His members. "How," she asked, "can man think of the Son of God in the Blessed Sacrament and not be moved to tears of love and joy before Him here present whom all the angelic hosts adore? We may say that the most Holy Trinity instituted this Blessed Sacrament to draw to Itself the human soul and to lift that soul to God, and by detaching it from all created things to unite it to all the uncreated Divine essence that it may die to all evil and live only by the spirit in the ether of divine things. The most Holy Trinity has willed to become part of us that we may become part of It, that man may dwell in God

and God dwell in man. . . . All that is good, beautiful, and holy is in this most Blessed Sacrament. There is the greatest uncreated Good—the pure Divinity; there the greatest created good—the Humanity of Christ; therefore we should praise Him unceasingly like the angels, never tired of repeating Holy, Holy, Holy.”

She continues: “Let him who approaches this mystery consider that he comes to receive Him in whom alone all good is to be found. . . . One day I was about to communicate when I heard a heavenly Voice which said: ‘Thou hast all good and art about to receive It.’ . . . Then I thought how could it be that I should receive a greater good, if I already possessed it? At once I was answered: ‘I am He who can abound and superabound.’ Thus as I approached the altar I heard these words: ‘The Son of God is on the altar in His Humanity and His Divinity, surrounded by a multitude of angels.’ Then I greatly desired to see Him thus, and my eyes were opened and I saw this glory. I saw God. Then I heard a Voice which said to me: ‘Beloved, thus thou shalt stand before God for all eternity.’”

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Angela's last letters to her disciples are meditations on the love of God in the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation, and at the end she turns to thank God for His gifts to His creatures, saying: “Most sweet Lord, I pray Thee to grant that I may know seven of Thy present gifts to us Thy creatures. Firstly, the ineffable gift of our creation. Secondly, the wonderful election by which Thou hast destined us to share in Thy glory. Thirdly, the gift of Thy Son Jesus Christ, who was born and died to give us life. Fourthly, the precious gift of reason, because when Thou didst

create me it was only by Thy Goodness that Thou didst not make me like to the animals. From this gift of reason I feel a triple grace: to know and recognise Thy wonderful greatness, to know and estimate rightly my own sins, to resist by Thy grace the temptations to sin. O Incomprehensible One! what other gift could be superior to this one? Thou hast created us in Thy likeness and image, Thou hast clothed us by our reason with Thy own light, Thou hast given us intelligence. O Lord, grant that I may know how precious is this fifth gift of intelligence, by which I may know Thee, and worship Thee in all Thy works and call Thee my God. The sixth gift is wisdom, and grant me grace to assimilate also this gift of Thy Love, a gift above all others which gives me the power of knowing and feeling Thy Truth. The seventh gift is Love. O most pure Essence! grant me to know Love, for the saints and angels do not ask for more than to see Him whom they love, and to love Him whom they contemplate. O Gift without equal! for Thou Thyself, O Lord, art Love.

“O supreme Good! how much we owe Thee who hast made us able to know and to love Love, according to the measure of which we shall be judged and rewarded when we stand in Thy Divine Presence, and there is no other power but Love which can bring the contemplative soul to contemplate Thee. O most admirable Lord! how many wonders dost Thou not work in Thy children. O perfect Good and Incomprehensible Kindness and Ardent Charity! O Divine Personality which makes our substance one with Thine own!

“Substance of Thy substance! Truly this is the miracle of miracles, the marvel so far surpassing our imagination, O Mystery of mysteries! There is no human intellect which, contemplating Thee, doth



not stop short, baffled by its own impotence. But by Thy grace and Divine light we can feel and taste that same substance which we can never in this world arrive at understanding. That substance is the sweet 'Token and promise for all who live in solitude of spirit, in the loneliness of this harsh desert.' God grant that man in this solitude may be drawn to the contemplation of Him even as are the angels in Heaven. Then they are true contemplatives, detached from created things, solitary in spirit, and their communion and conversation is with God, to whom be glory. Amen."

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Before her death Angela blessed her spiritual sons and daughters in very simple words: "Fatevi piccoli, fatevi piccoli," she repeated, praying that they might follow Christ in poverty and humility. Fra Arnaldo tells us that after this she spoke but little, though they caught words coming as from a great way off: "The Word was incarnate. . . . No creature is sufficient . . . no intelligence even of angels is sufficient"; and we asked: "For what is all the intelligence of angels not enough?" and she answered: "To understand." Then, immersed in joy, her bodily and spiritual sufferings ended, she passed into the peace of God.

This was on 4 January, 1309, and she was buried in the Franciscan church of Foligno. She was beatified by Innocent XII in 1693.

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Thus ended the life of this great visionary and teacher, who will always remain as a link in the long chain of mystical religion. She had won the battle over herself; she has transmitted to many



generations her own abundant spiritual energy, and her message is as alive to-day as ever it was in thirteenth-century Umbria. I have not attempted here to try to trace the connection between Angela and the other great mystics and mystical poets before and after her; that were a study in itself. In her outlook of soul, her mystical experience, and doctrine she is sometimes akin to Plotinus, and especially to Dionysius the Areopagite and the Christian Fathers. With them she escapes to the illimitable world of God beyond the heights of Heaven. She perpetually echoes their words, although probably she had never heard them with her outward ears. She is the direct precursor of Ruysbroeck, and his words on the deified souls sum up much that Angela taught and what she herself undoubtedly enjoyed. He says: "Because they have given themselves to God in every action, mission, or submission, they possess a peace and joy, a consolation and savour that none can comprehend—neither the world, nor the creature adorned for himself, nor whosoever prefers himself before God. These interior souls, these men of lucid vision have before their eyes, whensoever they will, the invitation of love which draws them towards the One and says 'Come home.' . . . Further, illuminated men are caught up above reason into the domain of naked vision. There the Divine Unity dwells and calls. Hence their bare vision, cleansed and free, penetrates the activity of all created things, and pursues and searches it out, even to its heights. This bare vision is penetrated and impregnated by the Eternal Light as is the air by the sun. The naked will is transformed by the Eternal Love as is fire by fire. The naked spirit stands erect, it feels itself to be wrapped round, affirmed, and fixed by the formless immensity of God. Thus,

far above reason, the created image is united by a three-fold bond with its eternal type the Source and Principle of its life."

All this is true of Sister Lella, the humble Franciscan Tertiary and great contemplative. Well can it be said of her, in the words of Saint Augustine: "Her life was a real life, being full of God."

"Deus dulcedo cordium et lumen beatorum qui beatam Angelam famulam tuam mira rerum coelestium contemplatione, recreasti: concede ut: per ejus meritis et intercessione ut Te cognoscamus in terris ut in revelatione sempiternae gloriae tuae gaudere mereamus in coelis. Amen."

*Roman Breviary.*

## CHAPTER III

SAINT MARGARET OF CORTONA

1247-97

*Antica Leggenda della Vita e Miracoli di*

*Sta. Margherita di Cortona* . . . Fra Giunta Bevignati e  
Badia Ventura.

Trans. P. Ludovico di  
Pelago.

Siena, 1897.

*Sainte Margu  rite de Cortone* . . . P. L  opold de Ch  ranc  .  
Paris, 1888.

*Acta Sanctorum*

*Storia Breve di Sta. Margherita di Cortona* P. Pietro Gorla.  
Milan, 1926.

## SAINT MARGARET OF CORTONA

SAINT MARGARET of Cortona in many respects presents a contrast to Blessed Angela of Foligno. Both reached the same spiritual goal within a few years of each other, in two small towns, though Saint Margaret had none of Blessed Angela's philosophical turn of mind. Neither had she any of Angela's power of analysis or literary expression, and almost her only writings are a few admirable letters. In the case of Angela we almost forget her life in her writings, whereas with Margaret it is her life upon which our attention is fixed, for all her teaching is there. We are perhaps inclined too often to think of the saints as beings radically different from ourselves; and so in one sense they are, yet their power over us lies in the fact that they are really so like us. In them divine grace conquers faults which are exactly the same as ours, and out of the ordinary circumstances of everyday life such as fall to the lot of each one of us they rise to triumphant heights of sanctity. We are treading the same road as theirs at a lower level. Besides being saints they are first of all great human beings, whose histories are full of the struggles and sufferings, the joys and sorrows of our complex human nature. The story of Saint Margaret touches us because she reached the Divine Love through human love and disappointment and difficulty, and she is a living example of those words of Saint Augustine: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart cannot rest until it rests in Thee."

She was born in 1247 at Laviano, a hamlet near Cortona. Her father was a prosperous peasant, and

she had one brother, Bartolomeo. She was a naturally affectionate child and led a happy life until her mother died when she was seven. In two years her father married again, and she, who only asked to be loved, found harshness and complete lack of sympathy in her stepmother. She does not seem to have shown any precocious signs of sanctity, although she was certainly inclined to religion. Finding her home unhappy, she sought the companionship of other boys and girls of her own age, and threw herself, innocently enough, into whatever amusement came her way. She was beautiful and had the gift of pleasing all who knew her. She had no one to guide her, for after his marriage her father seems to have neglected her, and she was therefore left alone to do much as she liked. At seventeen she met a young nobleman of Montepulciano who fell violently in love with her. He offered her jewels and persuaded her to meet him secretly. He promised to marry her, for he assured her she had no need of a dot, young and beautiful and full of life as she was. She, poor child, dazzled by his admiration, and all too anxious to escape from her home, believed him and consented to follow him to Montepulciano.

We know nothing for certain of this lover of Saint Margaret. Unluckily her two biographers, Fra Guinta Bevignati and Don Badia Ventura, were so anxious to insist upon the sanctity of her later years that they remained almost completely silent about her early life. Thus the name of this man is forgotten, his family or political position; all that is sure is that he failed in his promise to marry the beautiful and affectionate girl, though he succeeded in keeping her with him for nine years. She loved him deeply, and no sting of conscience availed to break the bonds which united them. One son was born to them.



Margaret the peasant girl had become the lady of the castle; she had fine clothes and jewels, servants to wait on her. She was admired and flattered and yet she was not happy. She says in her after years that her soul was unsatisfied. The sight of a lily only reminded her of the purity she had lost, the smile of passers-by seemed a reproach; above all, the memory of her mother arose in her heart to condemn her. Earthly happiness had no power to satisfy her. "At Montepulciano I lost honour, dignity, and peace, everything except faith." Such was Margaret's own summary of those years.

Then suddenly the break came. In 1274, the year in which Saint Bonaventure died, her lover went out one morning and fell into the hands of assassins. Margaret was fetched to the spot by his faithful little dog and found him in the wood, lying dead in all the strength of his young manhood. There on his body she died to her former self, and rose up only to live for God. Poor as she had arrived at Montepulciano, so she left it, with her son, to return to Laviano, hoping to find shelter in her father's house. He, perhaps, might have taken his daughter back, but the implacable dislike of her stepmother turned her and her child away from the door, to fend for themselves as best they could.

It was a moment of crisis. Margaret knew, only too well, that, beautiful as she was, it would be easy enough to find a roof and a protector. There in the fields, beneath a fig tree it is said, she faced the temptation and overcame it. She heard an interior voice bidding her go to Cortona and seek out the Friars Minor, and so the girl of twenty-six and the child of seven set out along the dusty road towards their unknown new life.

Cortona at that time was a walled mountain city like many others of Central Italy, perpetually at war in defence of her independence, and rent by local feuds. Only a few years earlier, the patriot condottiere Ugo Casali had helped the Sienese to beat the Florentines at Monteperti. He had succeeded in restoring peace to Cortona, building up the ramparts and establishing order within the walls. Saint Francis had visited Cortona on one of his missions in 1221, and he had rested there on his last journey back from La Verna to Assisi in the little hermitage of the Celle. After the chapter of 1239, when Elias was forced to resign the post of minister-general, largely through English influence, he retired to Cortona. His ill-starred championship of the Emperor Frederick II only brought him excommunication; but the last years of that powerful, turbulent spirit were spent in restoring the Celle and building a new convent and church of Saint Francis. At Cortona he died in 1253, reconciled to the Church, a humbled man, begging for mercy. Whatever were the sins of Elias, he was the friend of saints and, according to his lights, their follower. He seems to have always been torn between the two sides of his own nature, one so overbearing, so un-Franciscan, the other capable of that real devotion and love which dictated the beautiful letter he sent out to the provincial ministers on the night of the death of Saint Francis, and which he signed, "Elias, Sinner."

The memory of Elias naturally lived on at Cortona with that of Blessed Guido Vagnotelli, another of the early brothers, and the Franciscan fraternity was the most active religious element of the town.

When Margaret entered Cortona that spring evening by the Porta Berarda she was homeless and penniless, but two women, Marinaria and Raneria Moscari,

chancing to meet her in the street, took pity on her. They carried her and her child back to their own house, and there she found friends and a home. The inner voice had directed her to the Franciscans, and the Moscardi ladies hastened to introduce her to the friars. One of these, Fra Giunta Bevignati, a priest of great learning and virtue, immediately became her director, and between them there grew up one of those beautiful spiritual friendships which are possible between saints.

He seems to have realised at once the responsibility of guiding such a soul, and from beginning to end of her convert life his wisdom and help never failed her. Margaret felt for him the deepest gratitude and affection, she encouraged and helped him when they were both sorely persecuted, and many of her visions had a direct message for him.

Fra Giunta in his biography allows us to follow Margaret's inner life step by step. She was a simpler nature than Angela of Foligno, and we hear nothing of the struggles and effort which were the cost of Angela's conversion. From the moment that she turned from the world she knew no hesitation, henceforth Saint Mary Magdalene was her model, Saint Francis her patron. Like practically all souls of her type, there were no limits to her repentance and love. Her whole being had turned to God irrevocably and completely. A deep gulf separated her from her past, yet it seemed to her that no penance, no mortification could sufficiently express her remorse. Every day she sought new means of humiliation, new penances, she denied her body everything. When her beauty seemed only to increase she would have mutilated her face had not her confessor prevented it. She conquered herself not only by extraordinary penances and self-inflicted suffering but also by the simple,

homely means of denying herself everything she naturally liked, down to fresh figs. She wished to make a public confession of her sins, and would have walked barefooted with a rope round her neck to Montepulciano, had Fra Giunta allowed it. He would, however, only consent to her appearing one Sunday at Laviano and asking forgiveness from her former companions for the scandal she had caused. In her own eyes she was the basest of criminals.

In reading of such penance as Margaret's it is easy to sweep it aside as medieval, forgetting that it fulfils an unchanging need of the human heart. Thus only can certain souls express their repentance for sin, their love for the Love they have wounded and scorned. It is not the way down which the majority of Christians are asked to go, but for certain souls it is the path to-day as it ever was in the past, however much our comfort-loving age may shrink from the thought. If the followers of Saint Francis are to be true to his spirit, then penance and joy must go hand in hand. He was very hard on Brother Ass himself, though finally he did beg forgiveness of his much-tried body. No human being has ever been farther from a morbid craving for suffering than Saint Francis, and towards others he was invariably indulgent and prudent. For him penance was the glad expression of love, and that was what he wished it to be for his disciples. It was certainly that for Saint Margaret.

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Margaret by now was leading a life devoted to works of charity, for the first impulse of her generous nature was to devote herself to others. She earned the daily bread for herself and her son by spinning, but there was soon not a sick or needy person in Cortona who did not turn to her for help, knowing

they would never be refused. Her great desire was to be admitted to the Third Order of Saint Francis, but the friars, knowing her past history, at first would not consent, and for three years she was kept waiting, she who was such a true lover of the Poverty of Christ. At last her wish was granted, and her entry into the Order marked a new step in her life. She resolved henceforth to live only by alms, to increase in mortification of self and loving service of others. She considered her room in the Palazzo Moscardi too comfortable, and begged her friends to let her move to a poorer one near the church of San Francesco. They understood and loved her well enough to consent. Here, in this new cell, another sacrifice was asked of her which to her loving nature was an agony. She felt that she must part with her twelve-year-old boy, that she must send him away, both for his sake and her own, in obedience to the Divine Love which filled her heart. He was sent to the Franciscans at Arezzo, and the last tinge of self in her love for him was overcome. She gave him up to God, and took as her children all the poor and sick of Cortona.

It was after her entry into the Third Order that the visionary period of her life began. Her deeply emotional and sensitive nature had immediately responded to the spiritual influence, and now was the moment for all her mystical powers to develop. Her life was a continual prayer, and she would spend hours before a crucifix in the church of Saint Francis, weeping with Saint Francis over the Love that is not loved. "My God who hast thus suffered for me, can it be that Thou wilt forgive me?" she cried, and an audible Voice from the Cross answered her: "My poor sinner, what dost thou desire?" "Lord Jesus, I seek only Thee, I desire only Thee." Such was the



answer of love to Love, and a few days later Margaret received the assurance that all her sins were washed away. She was told that she would be raised to great heights of Love of God, not only for her own sake, but to be an encouragement to all other sinners. She was to shine as a message of hope to every soul which from afar turns back to God.

She was now constantly seen by many witnesses raised in the air, in ecstasy often while praying in the church. She lived in a constant vision of divine things, endowed with extraordinary graces, such as the power of reading the hearts of others. As though to counterbalance these spiritual joys, she became the prey of terrible assaults of the devil. He tempted her to despair, to pride, filling her soul with doubts and with the darkest suggestions. She triumphed over all, and at last Christ appeared to her bringing her peace. Soon after this, when Margaret had again humiliated herself in penance and contrition, she seems to have been visited with a special sense of the joy of her filial relation to God. Then, like Saint Catherine of Siena and others, she was raised to the sublime experience of the Mystical Marriage. In the presence of the saints and angels of Heaven, Christ came into the centre of her soul, uniting her to Himself. A ring was placed on her finger, a crown of rubies on her head, and she heard His Voice commanding the angels to give her the spirit of contemplation like Saint Mary Magdalene, the love of the seraphim, the knowledge of the prophets, the gift of miracles, while she promised only to live for His service and for the glory of God.

"Margaret," said the Voice, "glorify Me and I will glorify thee, love Me and I will love thee, think only of My interests and I will think of thine." During all this time Margaret was continually rejoiced by



visions of Christ and especially of the Passion. She also saw the throne of Lucifer in Heaven given to Saint Francis; she was in constant sensible communion with the saints. Such graces she knew were sent to strengthen her for a definite mission, to set the seal of God upon His human instrument. She was called back from those moments of spiritual elation to earthly things by one of the usual feuds which it seemed would inevitably drag Cortona into war.

The Bishop of Arezzo, Guglielmo Ubertini Pazzi, had usurped his see from its rightful owner, and he was one of those partisans of the Emperor Frederick II who were far more given to war than to any pastoral work for souls. Sword in hand, his chief concern was the extension of his temporal power, and the liberty of Cortona was seriously threatened. Margaret received in a vision the order to warn the bishop that unless he desisted from his warlike career and signed a peace with Cortona, the wrath of Heaven would fall upon him. At first she resisted. Who was she, a poor sinner, to carry out such a mission? But it was confirmed in another vision, and she obeyed. Such was her authority that, what is more, she prevailed. The veteran patriot Ugo Casali and the converted peasant carried through all the negotiations with Arezzo, persuaded the bishop to change his mode of life and send away his mercenary troops, and thus peace was restored to the Val di Chiana.

Another and graver conflict between the emperor and the King of Sicily, about the sovereign rights over the Marches of Ancona and Romagna, threatened to bring the horrors of war over all the north of Italy, and again it was averted by the intercession of Margaret.

In those years when Italy was rent by war, caused

chiefly by the ambition of Frederick II, Margaret became an active apostle of peace, like that amazing child Saint Rose of Viterbo. In Saint Rose's short life of seventeen years she had opposed and defeated the emperor. How? Literally by prayer and fasting. At the age of seven she had offered herself to God as a victim for His Church, which was oppressed by the imperial pride and domination. At ten, dressed in the habit of the Third Order, standing on a stone in the market-place of Viterbo, she was preaching penance and the Catholic Faith, and the Pope, whom the emperor had unjustly dispossessed of the city, had no stronger champion than this gallant and precocious child. She roused the people to a renewed spiritual life, which was but the prelude to asserting their right to spiritual liberty. This Frederick knew, and Rose and her family were banished to Suriano, where she continued her preaching. Then suddenly Frederick died, and Pope Innocent IV and Rose returned to Viterbo. Her mission was finished, the world needed her no more, and she died in 1252. This intrepid girl had accomplished more than many a warrior; it was said that even while she preached the doves flew round her head, and they were her best-loved friends upon this earth.

Margaret's mission was not concentrated into one relatively short effort like Saint Rose's. It was more general, and after her entry into the Third Order in 1286 the Hospital of Mercy inspired and founded by her was opened. She had given away all her poor possessions down to her clothes, and one bitterly cold night found her left with only a straw mat with which to cover herself. Her cell was empty of even the barest necessities, she gave her time, her health, herself, to relieving the needs of others. Several devout souls had already gathered round

her, anxious to serve God under her direction, and they were united into a congregation, keeping the Franciscan rule without any enclosure. Margaret's mystical gifts in no wise affected her excellent common sense and powers of practical organisation, and the bishop approved this new Tertiary Sisterhood which became known as that of the *Poverelle*. Those followers of Saint Margaret, even more than those of Blessed Angela of Foligno, had all the characteristics of a religious community, with the veil for a grille and the hospital for a cloister. It was the first institution of its kind in the Third Order, and already the more zealous Tertiaries felt the need of a community life apart from the world. Later on, in the sixteenth century, these sisters with other regular Tertiary foundations came under the special rule for the cloistered Third Order. Saint Margaret and her sisters worked in conjunction with a committee which was elected to look after the business side of the hospital affairs. It fell to them to distribute the alms which were collected, more especially to those "poveri vergognosi" who were ashamed to beg. In case of civil feuds, all the friends of the congregation were to assemble under their banner and to use all their efforts to re-establish peace. They were on no account to interfere, or take sides as individuals, in any party strife.

About this time Saint Margaret had the joy of seeing her son enter the Franciscan convent at Arezzo. Thus the wish of her heart was realised that together they should walk along the road shown by Saint Francis. On this occasion she wrote him a letter full of wise counsel and that spiritual good sense which was always characteristic of her. "My child," she says, "may the Lord bless the service you have undertaken. If you fight as a man among

the soldiers of God and follow the advice of your mother, she will love you more and more. First of all, in Christ's name cultivate the plant of humility in your soul, love all your brethren with no exception or distinction, and respect the authority of your superiors. Be grateful to God for all His mercies, and be modest with men, never murmuring against any one. Avoid unnecessary contact with people in the world as the rule bids you, and only seek the company of your brothers and men of saintly life. Pray unceasingly with fervour and be always on your guard against the snares of Satan. Open your conscience entirely to your confessor, for the invalid cannot be cured if he will not show his wounds to the doctor. Receive the advice of prudent men and respect and prefer it to your own opinion. Recite carefully and completely the Office as ordained by our Holy Mother the Church, and if a brother should blame you, put your knee to the ground, uncover your head, and humbly acknowledge your fault. In every trial fix your eyes upon the crucifix. Obey readily those who hold the place of God over you. Keep the guard of your lips and speak briefly, circumspectly, and gravely. Examine your thoughts before God, and in everything you do avoid all that may displease Him. Finally, watch over the appetite of your senses, that your heart may always belong to God. Read often this letter, observe exactly what I have said, and keep it with you till your last breath, for it has been dictated by your mother's love."

Could any letter be more to the point? The visionary here becomes the most practical of guides, using no ecstatic language, but that of sanctified common sense, tracing the path not only for her son but for all who wish to lead a truly Christian life. We hear but little of this son, or of Margaret's

companions. Fra Giunta leaves them all in shadow, and his concern is with her ever-growing spiritual mission.

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Neither the hospital she had founded nor the sisterhood gathered round her was to be the final stage of Margaret's religious life. Hers was another and deeper vocation. By now she was famous; numerous miracles were attributed to her, and from far beyond the borders of Tuscany and Umbria people came to seek her help. Fra Giunta devotes a long and interesting chapter to the miraculous incidents of this period of her life, many of which were minutely attested by the persons concerned. In the church of Saint Francis she had numerous ecstasies, and like the Seraphic Father she had begged God that she might, as far as she was able, enter into the Passion of Christ. She was answered, that she too would be crucified in heart. During Maundy Thursday and Good Friday she was wholly absorbed in the sufferings of Our Lord, unconscious of her surroundings, while in spirit she followed each detail of the Passion and Death of Christ. She felt all the desolation of the Blessed Virgin, Saint Mary Magdalene, and the other holy women at the burial of Our Lord, and only with the dawn of Easter did her joy return. These events were to her a living experience, and Fra Giunta relates them with a simplicity which is more eloquent than any rhetoric.

The sight of such elevation of spirit naturally had an enormous influence on the people around her. Margaret was able to pacify many warlike spirits, including the famous Ghibelline leader, Guido da Montefeltro, who ended his life in the Franciscan convent at Ancona. It was about this time (1288)



that she received a new Divine command. It was one of those orders which from the human standpoint seem unnecessary, and yet by which alone the soul can be finally purified and the work of God accomplished. She was told to leave her present cell, the church of Saint Francis, the hospital, and her sisters, and retire to a miserable hut higher up the mountain. It was revealed to her that there God would fulfil His promise to crucify her in spirit. It was to be to her what La Verna had been to Saint Francis, and she must leave all to follow the guiding hand of God. Naturally her friends, and even the friars, were opposed to such an idea, but she knew that for her obedience was the only way. Accompanied by one woman she took possession of the dilapidated hut on the top of the hill on which Cortona stands. How insignificant, outwardly, this change of dwelling for one obscure Tertiary, and yet only by this could Margaret attain her full spiritual growth and fulfil her mission, and the world at that moment needed all the help that saints could give.

The outlook in Europe and the East was dark indeed. The Crusades of Saint Louis had failed; he had died in 1270; the holy places of Palestine were in the hands of the infidels. They were even threatening Europe, and no power seemed able to stop them. The crusading spirit languished, although Nicholas IV, a man of indomitable energy, ordered the Franciscans and Dominicans to preach for its revival. He sent ambassadors to every court, whilst missionaries such as Giovanni di Montecorvino and Blessed Oderic of Pordenone fought to establish the Cross in the remote outposts of civilisation. While the Pope's message sounded through Europe, in her Tuscan hermitage God spoke to Margaret in a vision: "Go and be the angel of peace and the apostle of My



mercy." She was to rouse the Franciscan Friars and the local clergy to redouble their efforts in the cause of local peace and missionary zeal. Too humble not to obey, Margaret went through the streets of Cortona calling the people to penitence and peace.

Her appeal to her fellow-citizens was not in vain, but the Bishop of Arezzo, Ubertini, this time turned a deaf ear to her voice. He had gone back to his old rebellious ways and, despite her entreaties and the command of the Pope, embarked on new warfare. Not for long, however, for he fell at the Battle of Campaldino in 1289, when the Florentines routed the Ghibellines of Arezzo. "A great warrior" was the judgment passed on him by Villani. Margaret failed with the bishop, as the Pope failed to rekindle the spirit of the Crusades, for only King Edward of England answered his appeal. Too late, however, for before the troops could be mobilised and the expedition set sail, the Crescent was firmly established over the holy places, and two hundred years of sacrifice and heroism seemed lost.

Margaret too was about to enter the darkest trials of her life. She was now isolated on the hill-side; but thanks to her efforts the deserted church of San Basilio, quite near her retreat, was restored to divine worship, and a priest, Don Badia Ventura, appointed to serve it. Unfortunately the woman who was her companion proved most untrustworthy, and her dishonesty gave an opportunity to malicious tongues and jealous hearts to attack Margaret herself. Calumny spread fast; she was accused of every kind of hypocrisy, even sorcery, and the fickle wind of public opinion veered round from admiration to scorn and hatred. She was execrated on all sides, and even her friends doubted her. Her gift of prophecy was withdrawn, and no miracle happened to help

her. All that she had done for Cortona in the past seemed forgotten. She bore it with fortitude and sweetness, only praying that the evil her enemies did her might be changed for them into blessings.

Fra Giunta took up her defence, dismissed her unworthy attendant and put in her place the faithful and devoted Suor Giulia; but even he could not stem the flood of popular feeling. Indeed, he was to be a victim of it himself, for he was first of all forbidden to see his penitent more than once a week, and finally sent away to Siena. This was indeed a trial both to himself and Margaret. She must have felt that her last human protector was removed, and he had to leave this woman, whom he alone appreciated as she deserved, at the mercy of her enemies. With splendid courage and trust in God they separated, and Don Badia became Margaret's director and the biographer of this part of her life. Thus were her human and even spiritual affections crucified; but there was worse to come, for after the outward loss of her friend came the inner loss of the sense of God. She who had enjoyed such intimate union with Him was apparently left to herself, with no inner vision, no consolation, no certainty even of her salvation; and surely only those who know the divine consolations can understand what such a deprivation can mean. She was then very near to Christ on the Cross. We only know that for over a year she suffered this supreme martyrdom, during which her courage and faith never failed.

Then suddenly one day the darkness lifted and Margaret knew again the joy of the presence of God. He had never left her, she was assured, but this earth is a place of trial, not for the enjoyment of the delights of Paradise. "Ah, Lord," answered the saint, "nevertheless where Thou art is Paradise." The light shone

again in Margaret's heart; again she enjoyed the divine revelations, and in a series of visions received various warnings and messages to those about her.

The friars of Cortona were greatly distressed when in 1295 the hermitage of the Celle fell into the hands of the "Fratricelli," but the false mysticism of their most un-Franciscan heresy was confronted with the true mystical strength of Saint Margaret. She took an active part in the fight against them; and the revelations she received from Our Lord coincide strikingly with Blessed Angela of Foligno's words on the subject of poverty and of the Order. In one vision she asked of Christ who indeed in the Order was the true spiritual, and the answer came: "The true disciple of Saint Francis is he who seeks above all to follow the virtues I have shown, to be truthful and pure, because I am the Truth and Stainless Purity. If he be a lay brother let him never lose the spirit of prayer, if a priest or preacher let him be entirely devoted to his ministry and the care of souls. The true disciple of Saint Francis is he who loves poverty for My sake who lived in poverty, who is obedient, even as I obeyed My Father to the death on the Cross, who is ready to suffer all, and who in the midst of humiliation and trials suffers for love of Me, yet keeps his soul in peace and joy."

Here is indeed the authentic note of the spirit of Saint Francis. In the controversy raging in the Order as to the interpretation of the rule, Saint Margaret takes her place with the great spiritual souls who kept the true spirit alive for future generations in the large Catholic sense. They saw the internal questions of the Order from the wide apostolic point of view, and kept the balance between the two conflicting parties. In these disturbances caused by the headstrong wilfulness of some of the zealots

and the selfish laxity of many of their opponents, it was mostly the barren leaves that fell from the Order, not living branches capable of bearing new fruit.

Alas! that Ubertino da Casale did not follow Margaret's advice when he came to Cortona, and that his zeal and desire for reform should have led him and Angelo Clarenò, with their followers, into fruitless wilds of barren revolt. It cannot be too much said that there were great and holy men in the Spiritual Party, and that, being human, many of the other friars needed only too sorely to be recalled to the first ardour of their profession; but the spirit could not be renewed by the way of open revolution, which was the remedy of the extreme Spirituals. That led merely to the exaggeration of the Flagellants, and spiritual calamities such as that of Fra Dolcino or Guido Segarelli.

After Ubertino da Casale, Margaret also received the visit of Blessed Conrad of Offida, then an old man. He was one of the great Franciscan contemplatives of the second generation, who for a short time had joined the Celestine Hermits, but returned to the Friars Minor. These two ardent lovers of poverty met in Margaret's cell, and the night afterwards, when Blessed Conrad was praying, he saw the mountain all lit up and flames springing from one point on its side. He was still wondering whence the fire was, when he heard a voice saying: "That point is the soul of Margaret who only seeks God."

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Margaret spent nine years in her cell on the hill above Cortona, during which time her soul passed through its final purification and rose to the ultimate height possible to her in this life of union with God. More than her work in the hospital, more than in

directing her disciples, Margaret's vocation, like that of Saint Mary Magdalene, to whom she has so often been compared, was at the feet of Christ in loving contemplation. From this retreat she gave out generously to all of her own spiritual riches, but her active life was over, her battle was finished; she was hidden with Christ in God.

She had written three admirable letters to Fra Giunta during his absence in Siena, full of encouragement of his preaching and apostolic work, and conveying to him her own peace of mind. These two souls, who had been so beautifully united in a common love and enthusiasm, were now to see each other again. Fra Giunta was sent back to Cortona, thus fulfilling Margaret's prophecy to him, made some years earlier, that he should be with her when she was dying. She had long been suffering from an abscess in her mouth, and it had been revealed to her that when that ceased, as it now had done, the end would be at hand. She was reduced to a miserable state of illness, yet she longed only for more suffering by which to express her love and continue the work of saving souls. She lived in an almost continuous visionary state, longing for her final release from earth; but, in the words of Saint Francis, asking of Christ only to die for "love of that Love, who for love of my love hast not refused to die."

On 3 January, 1297, an angel brought her the welcome news that with the dawn of 22 February she would be face to face with her Beloved. The devil made a final effort to tempt her to despair, but his power over her was gone, and nothing now could shake her peace. From 5 to 22 February she lived on the Sacred Host. She comforted and encouraged the friars, the other Tertiaries, and all the people of Cortona, who had now turned back to



her and gathered round her bed. "The way of salvation is easy," she told them, "it is enough just to love." She received the last sacraments on 21 February, asking the pardon of all for her sins, and as the angel had foretold, with the first light of dawn Margaret's soul left this earth. At the moment of her death her soul was seen like a ball of fire in the sky surrounded by a number of other souls whom her prayers had set free from Purgatory.

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The authorities and people of Cortona, Laviano, and the surrounding districts at once determined to honour their saint to the utmost of their power. Angel of Peace and Mother of Orphans they entitled her, and she whom they had at one time persecuted was carried to the grave amidst general veneration. Her first friends, the Moscarì ladies, were there with Ugo Casali, now an old man and himself soon to die in the odour of sanctity. At once a succession of miracles began, too long to treat of here, but which has continued through the centuries. Cortona naturally took her for its patroness, and the first stone of the church to be built in her honour was laid in the year of her death.

Her story was painted by Bufalmacco and Lorenzetti on the walls of San Basilio, the church she had restored, and which afterwards passed into the hands of the Observants, a reformed branch of the Friars Minor, founded by the Blessed Paolo Trinci in 1334. Leo X approved the cult of Blessed Margaret for the Order, Clement IX inscribed her name in the Roman Martyrology, and finally, on 16 May, 1728, she was canonised by Benedict XIII. He referred to her as the Saint Mary Magdalene of the Franciscan Order, and one choir sang: "Many sins have been forgiven



her, for she loved much," answered by another with the words: "I am my Beloved's and He has turned towards me. I have found Him whom I love; I hold Him and shall never leave Him."

It is as the penitent lover, therefore, that Saint Margaret of Cortona shines in the Franciscan Order. To the world she has shown once again what is the Love of God to the returning sinner, and has carried the message of peace and forgiveness to how many troubled hearts and desolate lives.

"Deus qui famulam tuam Margaritam de perditionis via ad salutis tramitem misericorditer reduxisti: eadem nobis miseratione concede: ut, quam prius errantem sectari non erubuimus mox poenitentem impigre sequi gloriemur. Per Christum Dominum," etc.

*Roman Breviary.*



CHAPTER IV  
ST. LOUIS IX OF FRANCE  
1215-1270

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## SAINT LOUIS IX

KING OF FRANCE AND PATRON OF THE THIRD ORDER

*Il n'est guère donné à l'homme de pousser la vertu plus loin.*

VOLTAIRE.

“IT chanced that Saint Louis, King of France, went in pilgrimage to visit the sanctuaries of the world, and hearing the fame of the great holiness of Brother Giles, who had been one of the first companions of Saint Francis, the King set his heart to come and visit him in person. For this cause he came to Perugia, where Brother Giles then dwelt. And being come to the door of the Friar’s dwelling-place as a poor unknown pilgrim with but few companions, with great earnestness he asked to see Brother Giles without telling the porter who it was that asked for him. So the porter went to Brother Giles and told him that a pilgrim was at the door asking for him, and God revealed it to him in spirit that it was the King of France, so that at once with great fervour he left his cell and ran to the door without further question. Then, although they had never met before, they knelt down with great devotion and kissed each other with such tender love as though for a long time they had been intimate friends. For all this neither one nor the other spoke, but they remained in this embrace of love, silent. And when they had continued a long space of time in this manner, saying no word, they parted from each other, and Saint Louis continued his journey and Brother Giles returned to his cell. When the King was

departed, one of the brothers asked his companion who it was that had embraced Brother Giles for so long a time, and he replied that it was Louis, King of France, who had come to see Brother Giles. When this was told to the other brothers they were exceeding sorry for that Brother Giles had spoken no word, and murmuring they said to him: 'O Brother Giles, why didst thou show thyself so discourteous as to say naught to such a king who had come from France to see thee, and hear some good words from thy lips, and thou didst say to him never a word?' Then Brother Giles answered: 'Dear brothers, marvel not at this, for neither could I speak a word to him, nor he to me, for hardly had we embraced each other than the light of heavenly wisdom revealed his heart to me and mine to him, and thus by the Divine workings as we looked into each other's hearts, all that I would say to him and he to me, we knew far more clearly and with greater consolation than if we had spoken with our mouths. Even if we had so desired we could not have expressed that which we felt in our hearts because of the limitations of human speech which cannot clearly tell the mysteries of God. Had we spoken we should not have been thus consoled, for know that the King left me in great consolation and joy. To the glory of Christ. Amen.'"<sup>1</sup>

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History, alas, does not seem inclined to leave us this incident of the Fioretti, but though it may not be exact in actual fact, it is nevertheless a true picture of the spirit of the early Franciscan days, and of the character of the King of France. With Saint Louis we leave the Umbrian *milieu* to enter the field of European politics, and see the Franciscan

<sup>1</sup> This episode is also related in the *Acta XXIV Generalium*.



ideal in contact with all the problems of the thirteenth century.

When one seeks to understand that time, or indeed any other great moment of history, inevitably Mr. Trevelyan's fine words come to mind<sup>1</sup>: "On the shore where Time casts up its stray wreckage we gather corks and broken plans, whence much indeed may be argued, and more guessed, but what the great ship was that has gone down into the deep, that we shall never see." Who, indeed, can visualise the great ship of the thirteenth century in its entirety or grasp its immense significance? In Saint Louis, however, we have a synthesis of that century's highest aspirations, a reflection of its noblest endeavours, and he dominates the France of his time, presenting to us that rare thing, a complete and coherent view of life. With great truth Goethe said, that to think is easy, to act difficult, and to act in accordance with one's thought the most difficult of all. This Saint Louis consistently did, and it gave him his great place in history and made of him a saint.

He was the living contrast to his contemporary, the Emperor Frederick II, that enigmatic personality and most provocative of medieval figures. He it was who ruled half Europe and part of the East, hailed alternately as Messiah and Antichrist, who was partly pagan emperor, partly man of the Renaissance, a romantic of vast ambitions, a nature swayed by imaginative intelligence united to a fierce scepticism, ruled by the desire to know, to possess, to enjoy. It is very difficult to grasp what manner of man Frederick was. The King of France, on the other hand, appears as wholly comprehensible, and he stands out a clear figure against the political and religious background of his day. He was ruled

<sup>1</sup> *The Present Position of History*, p. 28. Longmans, 1925.

entirely by spiritual values, his mind and heart were concentrated on them, his will upon their realisation in his daily life. His power was wielded with the sole idea of applying them to the affairs of his kingdom. "Gouverner bien" were words often upon his lips, and it was the object and preoccupation of his whole career. Yet Louis does not in any way appear as merely a monk without a cloister; he was far too vital for that, too fully alive in the sphere in which he had been born. He was the happy father of a family, a warrior and lawgiver, a reformer and politician; such a good king because he was such a saint. Under him feudalism died in France, and the monarchy emerged in all its power; Louis was the embodiment of all that was best in the system which later on could declare: "L'Etat, c'est moi."

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He inherited a great tradition from his grandfather, Philippe Auguste, and his father who had been surnamed Louis the Lion. The relentless crusade against the Albigensians was in full swing during Louis's childhood, and in 1225 the French army entered Avignon, thus subduing the last southern stronghold to the Crown.

It was Louis the Lion's last victory, for on 9 November, 1226, just a month after the death of Saint Francis, Louis died, leaving his eleven-year-old son Louis as King of France under the regency of his mother. Within a fortnight of his father's death, Louis, a child no longer, had received the order of knighthood, and all his life he remained a "courteous and gentle knight," such as Saint Francis had loved in Angelo Tancredi.

In him the words of the ceremony, that the perfect knight should be bathed in honour, courtesy, and virtue,

came true. When he knelt in his new armour before the altar during Mass, and the naked sword was given him, he swore to use it in defence of the Christian faith and to wound no man unjustly, the oath was no empty formula, but the guiding spirit of his whole life. He was crowned almost immediately in Rheims Cathedral. There he received the homage of such of his great vassals who had obeyed the queen mother's summons to the coronation; but the political outlook for the boy king would have been a very troubled one had he not had the commanding genius of Blessed Blanche of Castile to protect him.

Louis came of an intrepid line on his father's side, and from his mother he may well have inherited his force of character, his strength and decision, the majesty of the royal house of Castile. Blanche is one of those figures who across the centuries command respect and awe. She was the daughter of Alfonso VIII, and a granddaughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, beautiful, the chroniclers say, as an eagle or a stag. All the tenderness in her nature seems to have been given to her husband, and, says the chronicle, "Never queen so loved her lord, and they were so attached to each other that they were always to be seen together." When he died she would willingly have followed him, but instead she was left to face the world alone, for and with her children. Of these, besides Louis, she had four. Robert, Comte d'Artois, was next to the king and his favourite. He grew up gay and reckless, loving minstrels, sport, and adventure—a most delightful person. Everyone loved him, and mourned him when he, the ideal Crusader to whom death meant nothing, met it on the sands of Mansourah. Alphonso, the next brother, was a seemingly colder nature, an able administrator and man of business, who did enormous service to

the French Crown in the ruling of his vast estates in Poitou and Auvergne. The youngest was Charles, whose career was that of a medieval epic, and he needed a larger field than France to satisfy his ambition. Louis had but one sister, Isabella, and spiritually they were much alike. Isabella appears as one of those temperaments to whom, apparently, holiness is easy; her life was centred in love of God and of her family. She was the good angel of each of them, by no means tediously pious, but an entirely concentrated nature. She spent her dowry in building the convent at Longchamps for the Urbanist Poor Clares, where she lived and died, and she was beatified by Pope Leo X.

To all her children there is no doubt Blanche was an excellent and affectionate mother, and Louis's love for her never varied. She was essentially of that race of strong souls who Saint Teresa said are chosen by God to work for the souls of others, and there was no lack of firmness in her children's education. A tutor was chosen who apparently whipped the king as a wholesome discipline and preventive; but on the other hand Blanche saw to it that they had healthy recreations and games, and that they were well and richly dressed according to their rank.

She was severely holy, and was wont to say she would rather see her son dead than commit a mortal sin. Louis from his childhood was accustomed to follow the canonical hours of the Divine Office and submit to all the discipline of the Church, and his own love of God made those practices throughout his life not only a duty, but a joy, from which he never swerved. The sacrament of baptism meant so much to him that in after years he always preferred to sign himself Louis de Poissy, saying that it was there that he had received the highest privilege of

his life, for a greater honour than the crown he had received at Rheims was the cross laid upon him at the font of Poissy collegiate church.

Another powerful influence in Louis's life must have been the building of the great French cathedrals. From childhood upwards his sense of beauty developed as he saw the wonders of art rising on every side. The portals and gallery of Notre-Dame in Paris were finished in 1220. Rheims, Amiens, Bourges, Laon, Soissons, and Beauvais were in building; the lateral porches of Chartres were added in 1250. All the glory of the rising French Gothic architecture and its attendant arts helped to form the mind and soul of France's king.

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During the first years of Louis's reign it was entirely due to the political genius of his mother that his heritage remained intact. Intrigue followed intrigue, rebellions broke out and failed, conspiracies were rife against the regency, but the nobles were weak in precisely the ways that Blanche was strong. They lacked decision and unity of purpose, and too many conflicting interests were involved. Their policy came to nothing before the magnificent statesmanship of Blanche, her force of character and quick decisions, and her unfailing eye for the weakness of her opponents. Round her rallied the lesser nobles, most of the clergy, and the burghers, and when Louis formally took over the reins of government not one of his enemies was in a position to rise against him. His mother remained one of his chief counsellors all her life, and when he departed on the Crusade much of the government was left in her hands. Blanche died in 1252 while Saint Louis was in the East. When she felt her end



approaching she calmly gave up all worldly affairs, and, after having ordered that any she had wronged should be given due compensation out of her private fortune, she received the Cistercian habit, in which it was her wish to die, though Fra Mariano of Florence claims her also as a Franciscan Tertiary. The Chronicle of St. Denis adds that "her death brought sorrow to all the people, for she never allowed them to be oppressed by the rich, and kept strict justice."

It was naturally Blanche who was chiefly responsible for her son's marriage, and many reasons led her to choose Marguérite, eldest daughter of Raymond Bérenger IV, Count of Provence. Marguérite was said to be beautiful both in body and mind, and in every way suited to be the wife of Saint Louis. Politically, too, it was important to secure the friendship of a country like Provence, bordering on France, yet nominally subject to the emperor. Marguérite was brought to Sens in May 1234 with a splendid retinue, including a Provençal minstrel and six troubadours, and there, amid gorgeous festivities, she became the wife of the King of France.

Life cannot have been easy for the young queen. She came from the south, from that land of romance, of the courts of love where echoed the *chansons de geste* and the lays of the troubadours, and she entered a *milieu* which might be compared to a Gothic cathedral. Her twenty-year-old husband spent the first two nights of his married life in prayer and vigil; and though Louis undoubtedly loved his wife tenderly, it is difficult to guess at how deep their mutual understanding really was.

Marguérite was gallant and fearless, as we know from her behaviour during the Crusade. She was religious, too, though in a different way to her



husband, and she was faced with a very difficult situation. Queen Blanche was a formidable mother-in-law, who did not hesitate to try to spoil Louis's pleasure in his wife's society and to separate him from her. She made any happy companionship almost impossible, and even when Margu  rite lay dangerously ill, showed a hard temper which would willingly have driven the king from his wife's bedside. Yet Margu  rite wept bitterly when Blanche died, though she acknowledged it was not for the loss of her mother-in-law, but rather "for the grief of my dear lord the king."

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Louis and Margu  rite had eleven children. The eldest, Louis, died at sixteen, and it was to him that his father said: "Fair son, I pray you to see to it that you deserve the love of your people, for I would rather that a Scotsman should come and govern the kingdom well and loyally, sooner than that you should govern it ill."

The succession passed to his brother Philippe, known as the Bold. Several children died in infancy, but Jean Tristan, born during Saint Louis's first Crusade, lived to grow up, and died a few days before his father during the disastrous Crusade of 1270. There were also Pierre, Comte d'Alen  on, and Robert, Comte de Clermont, through whom the Crown of France descended to Henri IV. Four daughters completed the family: Isabelle, who married Thibaut IV de Champagne, King of Navarre; Blanche, the wife of her cousin Ferdinand of Castile, son of Saint Ferdinand III; Margu  rite, Duchess of Brabant; and Agnes, Duchess of Burgundy. Louis was perhaps a solitary at heart, but outwardly he was as thickly surrounded by relations as a man

well could be, and his saintliness was reached eventually by the sanctification, not the denial, of every tie and call of human life. He entrusted the education of his children chiefly to the Dominicans and Franciscans, certainly hoping that some of them might show signs of a religious vocation; but for him the liberty of the individual was sacred, and he would use no coercion in such a matter. When he was convinced that his sons and daughters had no call to the convent, he saw to it that they were well married and settled in life. His wish for his children is all in the words which he wrote to his beloved daughter Isabelle: "Our Lord make you perfect in everything as I desire, and more still than I know how to desire."

Louis preached to his children largely by example and by associating them with him in all his good works. Thus, when the Hôtel Dieu of Compiègne which the king had built was ready, the first patient was carried in by Louis and his son-in-law the King of Navarre, and the second by his sons Louis and Philippe. All the children seem to have inherited more or less their father's spiritual fervour, but especially Isabelle, his favourite daughter. To her the king could send a hair shirt and discipline, sure that his gift would be received and used with a joy equal to his own, and to her he wrote one of his beautiful letters setting forth what her life should be. It is from this letter and from the one written to his heir, Philippe, that we can best judge of the ideal that Saint Louis had for his children and which he first carried out so faithfully in his own life. He wrote: "Fair son, the first thing I wish to teach thee is to love God with all thy heart, for without this none can be saved. Keep thyself from doing evil in His sight, that is from mortal sin, suffer

rather all kinds of villainy and torment than to commit a mortal sin. If God sends thee adversity receive it patiently and thank Our Lord for it, and think how ill thou hast served Him and how He alone can turn all to good. If He sends thee prosperity thank Him for it humbly, so that it may not make thee proud or cause thee to use it unworthily. We must never seek to fight for the gifts of God. Confess thy sins often, and thy confessor shall tell thee what thou art to do. Behave thyself so that thy friends and confessor shall be able to tell thee thy faults. Attend carefully to the services of the Church with thy heart and voice, especially when the moment of consecration comes during the Mass.

“Let thy heart be pitiful and kind to the poor and the oppressed, and comfort and help them to the utmost of thy power. Maintain good manners in thy kingdom and fight all evil ones, and do not covet the goods of thy people. If thy heart be heavy, unburden it to thy confessor, or some true man who is not full of useless words, and thus thou wilt bear thy troubles more easily. See to it that thou be surrounded by true and loyal men who are not covetous, be they priests or laymen. Often speak with them and fly from the company of evil-doers. Listen to the Word of God and keep it in thy heart. Pray much and pardon willingly. Let none be bold enough in thy presence to speak words likely to lead to sin, or to detract from the absent, and let no blasphemy be uttered in thy hearing. Thank God continually for all His mercies, for thus only canst thou worthily receive more. Keep to justice and equity, turning neither to right nor to left, and help the cause of the poor until the truth is declared. If any one tries to influence thee, believe him not until the whole truth of a matter is known. Thus

thy counsellors will be able better to judge whether or not thou art right. If thou holdest anything or hast received it from thy predecessors unjustly, give it up without murmuring, and if it is doubtful, have it inquired into by honest and diligent men. See to it that thy servants and subjects can live in peace and concord under thee, and keep the charters and customs of thy realm as thy ancestors kept them, but if there be anything to amend let it be done.

“Keep thy faithful towns in affection, for their riches and strength shall be a defence against strangers, and thus thy peers and barons will hesitate to offend thee.

“Honour and love all the men of Holy Church and see to it that no one shall take away what thy ancestors have given to them. It is said of my grandfather Philippe that one of his counsellors objected that he lost much because that the Church took taxes which rightly should have been the King's, and that it was a wonder that he should suffer it. The good King thereupon answered that he believed fully what his counsellor said, but that when he looked at God's mercy to him, he preferred to relinquish his rights to the men of Holy Church. Give the benefices of the Church only to men of good and straight lives, on the counsel of wise advisers, and be prudent in all things.

“Hesitate to enter into war against any Christian man, and if thou be forced to it, hurt not the Church of God or the innocent, and if thy subjects quarrel, pacify them as best is in thy power. Be careful to have good stewards and inquire often of them into thy affairs as to how they are managed, and be sure there is neither dishonesty, trickery, nor covetousness. Take care that the expenses of thy household be reasonable. Strive that all sin may be banished

from this earth, and fight to root out heresy and false swearing. Love thy brothers and seek always their good and their advancement, take the place of father to them and show them the right path. Take care that however great thy affection for any human creature may be, that it shall not make thee swerve from the way of justice or cause thee to do that which thou oughtest not. Finally, dear son, have Masses said for my soul and prayers for thy kingdom, and let me have a part in all thy good works. I give thee all the blessings that a loving father may bestow on his son, and may the Blessed Trinity and all the saints defend thee from all evil. God give thee grace to do always His holy Will so that He may be honoured by thee, and that after this mortal life we may be together to praise Him endlessly."

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Louis's love for his children was fully returned by them, and indeed all who knew him felt not only the beauty but the charm of his sanctity. Let me quote an excellent paragraph from Miss Knox, for she is perfectly correct when she says of the king<sup>1</sup>: "If there is one thing that every chronicler alike tries to make clear it is the adoration that Louis inspired in his people. That brilliant heretic Frederick II respected him, Charles of Anjou, that harsh, reserved conqueror, wept like a child beside his corpse, Henry III loved him as a brother, those of his household adored him. His valet Gaugelm could not die until his master had visited him at Mansourah. His clerk and his cook each built a chapel to his memory, his Saracen gaolers were touched by pity and sympathy as they watched him. By the charm of his presence he could bring one of the unhappy Magdalenes of

<sup>1</sup> *The Court of a Saint*, p. 67.



Paris to repentance. Even in his illness as a young man, his people wept and prayed incessantly for him, and when he died the army fiercely refused to let his sacred remains be taken from them. 'For twenty years,' says his confessor, 'I was in the King's service and never knew him to commit a mortal sin; there was something about him so divine that he gave calm to the most troubled spirits and edified the holiest.' 'His good deeds,' says William of Chartres, 'lit up the realm like rays of the sun.' 'Like glowing embers,' according to William de S. Panthus, 'burned the King's love for God.'"

On all sides are instances of the king's charm and loveliness, and he must have been, from the purely human point of view, an extraordinarily attractive man, one of those natures who do not know either pettiness or meanness. He was even beautiful physically, tall and slender, with fair hair and blue eyes, says Salimbene, "with an angelic expression." He was brave as any hero of medieval romance and was always the first to expose himself in any peril. He had, indeed, that indifference to danger and death which came naturally from regarding them as literally of no importance, and it is small wonder that his men would follow him anywhere. He had, moreover, a quick sense of humour, and could easily enjoy a joke, and he talked pleasantly and freely with all so that no one felt ill at ease in his presence. He was so free from self-consciousness that he would willingly talk over his failures and smile at his own mistakes, and over and over again in Joinville's memoirs Saint Louis's laughter rings out. Even in the vision Joinville had of him after his death he was laughing at the seneschal's words, as he had so often done on earth. He had a naturally inquiring mind and quick intelligence, and even a hot temper, for



Joinville shows him more than once roused to sudden fury. He was not a man to be trifled with for all his humility, and neither his family, his subjects, nor his friends were ever allowed to forget that he was King of France. He knew very well how to assert his authority and to be obeyed.

It is Joinville, Louis's most intimate friend and admirable historian, who has shown us the king in his daily life, and saved him from the fate, which might so easily have been his, of appearing merely as the saint from a wonderful stained-glass window or medieval tapestry. The Sieur de Joinville was brought up at the literary and artistic court of Thibaut de Champagne, where the art of the troubadours still flourished, and he was himself an artist. From childhood he must have known the great romances of Chrétien de Troyes; his literary gifts developed under their influence, and in his enchanting memoirs he "opens a window in history" just as at a later date Castiglione did for the court of Urbino.

Joinville was some years younger than the king, loyal, devoted, and outspoken, but by no means afraid sometimes to disagree heartily from Saint Louis. He does not mind saying that he was far less religious than the king; nevertheless he understood him, and Saint Louis's deep spirituality shines out clearly from Joinville's pages.

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Saint Louis was endowed spiritually with great gifts, which he cultivated to the utmost of his power. This strong-willed, healthy man was at heart an ascetic, but it was an asceticism that had its roots in an overmastering love. For show and self-indulgence he cared not at all, though when occasion demanded he could entertain "liberally and

magnificently, as graciously, nobly, and generously as any of his predecessors." For himself he preferred the simplest of clothes, to the despair often of the queen. The fact that during the years 1256 and 1257 he spent £132 on his dress and £5099 on charity shows what his ideas of proportion in this matter were. He carried his unrelenting self-discipline into every department of life, never would he willingly order his own food, preferring to eat without comment whatever was set before him, and he fasted as rigorously as any monk. His penances were those of extreme ascetic devotion, until for the sake of his health his confessor persuaded him to give up the hair shirt which he so willingly wore. For him every occasion of self-denial was a Heaven-sent opportunity by which he might learn to walk in the way of the Cross, for, as the confessor of Queen Margu  rite rightly said, "The king knew the way to be strait that leads to the Kingdom."

Louis was profoundly attached to all the practices of religion; every detail of the liturgy was dear to him as the outward form ordained by the Church for the praise of God. Prayer was the centre of his life, never an empty formula, but the living communion between his soul and God, and his devotion had all the beauty of formal order inspired by a spontaneous love. His prayers seemed interminable to some of his attendants; but after all he could justly say: "Why should I be blamed for spending so long in prayer, when no one would criticise me for wasting so much time in hunting or dice?" The king's whole nature was fixed upon one thing, and he followed it, quite irrespective of any human consideration. He never missed reciting the Divine Office with his chaplains, and often after Matins he would stay on alone praying until he was so tired that he could

scarcely get back to bed. He heard two or three Masses a day, and the anniversaries of the Passion were to him days of personal mourning and sorrow. His religion was the tender and intimate intercourse with a Friend. Long and earnestly the king prayed for the gift of tears, begging in the Litany: "O Lord God, I dare not ask Thee for a fountain of tears, but grant me a few small drops to water the aridity of my heart."

It was Louis's devotion to the Passion which focused so much of his spiritual life upon the crown of thorns. This most sacred relic was offered to him in 1239 by the young Emperor Baldwin of Constantinople. Surely one of the happiest days of his life was when he, Queen Blanche, Queen Marguerite, the Archbishop of Sens, and all the Court set out to meet it at Villeneuve, whither it had been brought from Venice. With tears and overflowing hearts they knelt to receive it, for to them it was "as though they saw before them the Lord Himself crowned with thorns." As the procession proceeded, another came out to meet it of more knights and clergy bearing the cathedral relics, "as though the saints themselves desired to run to meet God."

The king and Prince Robert, barefoot and wearing the humblest of clothes, carried the reliquary on their shoulders during the eight-day procession to Paris, and there it rested in the chapel of St. Nicholas and then in Notre Dame. Louis managed to acquire another precious relic from Baldwin in a piece of the Cross, and for these two he set about building the beautiful shrine of the Sainte Chapelle, which was consecrated in 1248. If a building can express the personality and spirit of one man, surely Saint Louis lives in every line, and stone, and pane of glass of the Sainte Chapelle. In this exquisite place, so

unspeakably dear to him, his soul was poured out in a passion of devotion and love. Here he prayed for many hours before the Crusades and during his later years. Here, after his death, a vision of him in glory was seen. It is the witness in stone of a consuming faith, and though, alas! later years have desecrated it, the spirit of Saint Louis seems still to hover over the empty shrine.

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The king's religion was not merely in his public or private devotions, or in that "flight of the alone to the Alone" which was his own secret. It was expressed outwardly also in the glad service of his fellow-men, and in the fulfilment of the many duties and calls which pressed upon him. William of Chartres could say that "the nobles feared him because he was just, but the people loved him as men love God and the saints." Only as a saint could, Louis loved and cared for the souls of his subjects. It was precisely because he cared so much for souls that, for instance, his laws against blasphemy were so severe. He had such a horror of sin, of ignorance, and heresy, which in his eyes could only lead to moral degradation, that he was quite ready to welcome the Inquisition, if thus the tide of evil could be stemmed.

First of all, however, he cared for his people by charity, and this was wellnigh unbounded. He gave away not only money, but himself. Daily one hundred and twenty poor people fed at his table, and if by chance any blind were amongst them, it was the king who waited upon them. Like Henry III of England, and indeed most of the Christian sovereigns of that day, he washed the feet of the poor and clothed them. In a passion of sympathy he scattered money right and left, refusing no one.

He saw in poverty not a remediable evil, but the bride of Christ, and the poor and suffering were to him figures of his Redeemer; his one longing was to serve them.

No one more than Saint Louis understood the poverty of Saint Francis. He loved to collect the poor and miserable around him, many perhaps most "undeserving" cases. He would go barefoot in search of them, asking no questions, anxious only to give. Thus it was that one day walking in the streets of Compiègne, a leper passed, ringing his bell to warn people not to approach; but "when the King perceived him he hastened across the road, setting his naked feet in the gutter which ran down the middle, and went up to the leper and gave him alms, kissing his hands." Voluntary humiliation or pity? Yes; but more than that, rather overflowing love for Christ in His suffering humanity.

It was in this same spirit that Louis never ceased founding and endowing hospitals. Admirable rules were drawn up in regard to the treatment of the sick, who were to be considered as the masters of the house. Everything that sympathy could suggest, and money could buy, was to be done for the physical and spiritual well-being of the patients. There were special wards for the worst cases, and also for the convalescents who were not yet fit to leave, and for these Saint Louis ordered special care and warm clothes. Viollet-le-Duc was not exaggerating when he declared that in some respects the medieval Hôtel-Dieu could compare favourably with many modern hospitals. It could, as long as the spirit of charity reigned supreme.

The king would himself carry the sick, feed them, perform the meanest offices as a privilege, and the more repugnant the disease the more he sought out



the sufferers. Lepers in France at that time were not strictly segregated, and Louis shared all the enthusiasm of Saint Francis in tending them. One day, when he was visiting his beloved abbey of Royaumont, he heard that one of the monks was a leper in a terrible condition. The king knelt down and kissed him, fed him with his own hands; and, remarks Joinville, "the abbot perforce must do the same, but he did it out of respect for the king and not without shuddering."

This transcendent charity of Saint Louis was the logical outcome of a great faith. For him, to believe was not to acquiesce in certain dogmas, but to hold the "living evidence of things not seen, the substance of things hoped for." His faith in spiritual realities was the bedrock of his character, the driving force of his will. He needed no supernatural manifestation to affirm it. There is the well-known story which he loved to quote of some Albigensians who came to Simon de Montfort and invited him to come and behold the miracle of the bread and wine which had visibly become Flesh and Blood in the hands of the priest at the consecration, and he answered: "Go and see it if you do not believe; as for me, I believe in the holy Sacrament of the Altar firmly as the Church teaches, and therefore I shall have that blessing in Heaven which is for those who have not seen and yet have believed." Saint Louis lived by the light of this faith, and there is no record that he sought either for miraculous events or for the enjoyment of supernatural consolations. That certainty of soul which comes with faith was sufficient for him.

1 He was moreover an intellectual man whose faith was reasoned and armed against attack. He had a mind curious and eager for knowledge, loving letters and philosophy, and he collected a valuable library



which he left for the benefit of poor students. At that time the standard of learning in the great abbeys, such as Cluny and Saint Victor, was very high, and the schools of Paris, like those of Oxford, were famous throughout Europe. Here the king was among congenial spirits, and he loved the society of the schoolmen. In the friendship of Saint Bonaventure and Saint Thomas Aquinas he found a rest from the affairs of state, for to them he could talk unhindered of the things he cared for most. He was passionately interested in their studies. Did not Saint Thomas Aquinas when dining with him one day become so absorbed in an idea he was pursuing as to lose all sense of where he was, until he exclaimed triumphantly, "I have it!" to the delight of the king, who called at once for pen and paper that the precious definition should run no risk of being lost! It was Louis's own chaplain, Robert de Sorbon, who in 1253, with the king's help, founded a modest college of theology for poor students, which was confirmed by a papal bull in 1269, and became the famous Sorbonne. French religious and intellectual life was being stirred, too, by a new element, very different from anything it had known in past years, and which was brought by the coming of the friars.

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The Dominicans arrived first, in 1217, trained for the special purpose of fighting heresy, and they were the official missionaries of the Holy See in the struggle with the Albigensians, and came armed with the powers of the Inquisition.

In 1219 Saint Dominic found a flourishing community of thirty brothers in the Paris convent, and their first church, dedicated to Saint Jacques, was consecrated in 1220.

The Franciscans had also appeared in 1219, and at first they would accept neither money nor houses as property, but only on loan, while they did splendid service amongst the lepers and sick of Paris.

Saint Francis himself had cast longing eyes towards France, and at the chapter of 1216, when missionaries were being sent out to distant lands, he had exclaimed: "In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the glorious Virgin Mary and all the saints I choose the province of France, wherein is a Catholic people who more than any other shows a special reverence for the Body and Blood of Christ, which love is most pleasing to me; wherefore will I most readily go amongst them"; and the *Speculum Perfectionis*<sup>1</sup> goes on to say: "When inebriated with love and compassion for Christ and overflowing with sweetest melody of the spirit, oft-times would he find utterance in the French tongue, and the strains of the Divine whisperings which his ear had caught he would express in a French song of joyous exultation, and making the gestures of one who plays the viol he would sing in French of Our Lord Jesus Christ." How fitting, that when Saint Francis was dissuaded by Cardinal Ugolino from leaving Umbria, he should send Fra Pacifico, the former king of verse, to head the mission.

This same Fra Pacifico was tutor to Saint Louis, who thus heard the Franciscan teaching direct from a disciple of the Seraphic Father. His youth was passed in the first years of the Franciscan movement, and surely no man was more fitted to understand what the life of Saint Francis meant, or to respond to the appeal of his message. He was in close touch with both the orders of friars, and was indeed wont to say that if he could divide his body half

<sup>1</sup> Also told by Celano, *Vita*, II, chap. 90.

should go for the Franciscans, half for the Dominicans. His regular confessors belonged to the two orders, and his generosity to both was unstinted. At his death more than sixty institutions, of every order, looked to him as their founder, and in many cases, as at the abbey of Royaumont, he had laboured with his own hands. He built numerous convents and churches for both the Friars Minor and Poor Clares, and Salimbene describes the king's visit to the convent of Sens which he had helped Fra Pacifico to found. Whenever he could find time to spend a few days in a religious house he conformed exactly to the rule of the order, and it was his joy to be treated as a brother by the monks.

It seems certain that at one time he hoped to enter the order as a friar, when his eldest son should be of an age to govern, and it has been asserted that he formally took the habit of the Order of Penance. So far absolute evidence is lacking, and the Bollandists have denied that Saint Louis was a Tertiary, but the Supplement to the Roman Martyrology for the Franciscan Order contains the statement that King Louis IX of France was a Confessor of the Third Order of Saint Francis, which Order venerated him as its patron. This surely may be looked upon as conclusive, especially when we consider Louis's character and life and the evidence of contemporary art and tradition.

The Franciscans soon had houses all over France; many founded by Fra Pacifico, others by the Blessed Giovanni Bonelli, whom Saint Francis had sent with thirty companions to Provence, and Blessed Cristoforo, who went to Aquitaine. In 1224 Saint Anthony was in France, at Montpellier, where he lectured on theology and wrote a commentary on the Psalms; then, some writers say, he went to Limoges, Le

Puy, Bourges, and Toulouse. The French province flourished, and Paris became the centre of a group of friars who, though they may have differed from men like the First Companions, or from Brother Elias for that matter, had an immense influence in the development of the Franciscan movement.

Many of the first disciples of Saint Francis had been unlearned, but nothing is more striking in the second generation than the number of intellectual men who joined the Order, and with them came perforce a slightly different point of view. It was an enlarging of the borders, but not, amongst the best spirits, a betrayal of the Franciscan message. Saint Francis had indeed condemned learning for its own sake alone, but poverty of spirit was quite consistent with intellectual gifts, just as ignorance often went hand in hand with pride. He had himself wished that Cardinal Ugolino should be the Protector of the Order, and had appointed Saint Anthony as a teacher, and both were learned men. There are many instances of the reverence that Saint Francis had for learning, and according to his own words: "Our Order is like a general synod which unites souls from every part of the world into one rule of life. In it the wise may profit from the virtues of the simple, and the simple turn to their advantage the learning of the wise." Ubertino da Casale tells us that Saint Francis consented to each community having the necessary books for general use. Without study the apostolic work of the Order could hardly have continued, and only harm could come from a number of ignorant and unprepared missionaries. It was all a question of the right spirit and sense of proportion. The chief means of enlightenment was to be prayer, but learning must guide prayer and prayer illuminate learning.

By the middle of the thirteenth century the intellectual element in the Order was extremely strong. Robert Grosseteste, Saint Bonaventure, Duns Scotus, Adam Marsh, Aymon of Faversham, with the Dominicans, Albert the Great and Saint Thomas Aquinas made the schools of Paris, Oxford, and Bologna into the most vital intellectual centres of the Christian world. Paris did not darken the light of Assisi; it only reflected it from a different angle. The friars shone as philosophers and theologians, and in men like Roger Bacon and Pierre de Maricourt as scientists.

How modern many of Bacon's words sound with their burning critical spirit and scientific curiosity, and how exciting this spirit must have been to the students who came under his influence! With such minds in their ranks the mendicant orders were soon a great intellectual power. They were admitted to teach in the university; and considering who many of them were, it was hardly surprising that their lecture-halls were full. It was the school of great doctors and the true Spirituals who saved the Order a few years later, when the foolishness of some of the brothers nearly wrecked the Franciscan cause.

Joachimism had travelled fast from Italy to Provence, and had seized on some restless spirits, and in 1255 the *Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel* appeared in Paris. It was at once condemned by Alexander IV, but such a book showed clearly what would have been the fate of the Order left to the extreme zealots.

Even the powerful friar Hugh de Digne was led away, and he saw no path for the friars but that of stark material poverty.

"Go to the woods," he cried to would-be novices, "and learn to live on roots"; and when a wandering



order of Boscaioli sprang up at his words, their irregularities were naturally cast in his teeth. Salimbene describes Hugh as a man of brilliant talents, irresistible in argument, with a relentless logical mind, and a force of oratory which made his preaching like the "voice of a trumpet or the swollen waters of a cataract."

He was a man on fire with spiritual energy. When he spoke he "seemed a second St. Paul or Elias, and everyone felt a tremor at his words." Such was Hugh's fame that King Louis sent for him after he landed from the Crusade, and Joinville gives a vivid account of how he thundered against those monks who lived at the Court instead of in their monasteries. His warnings to the king seem rather exaggerated; but Louis was anxious to keep Friar Hugh near him. Hugh would not hear of it, and, says Joinville, "would do nothing to oblige the king. Then the king took me by the hand and said: 'Let us go again and ask him''"; but ask as they might, one day was all they got from Friar Hugh! He was a dissatisfied nature who, unfortunately, looked to the wrong guide for a way to heal the ills both within and without the Franciscan Order.

Hugh became the leader of the extreme Spiritual party at Hyères, where his sister Douceline also lived. She was of far gentler mould than her brother, and it was said of her: "She was so founded in the love of God that all this world was to her but a representation of God and in all fair things of nature she contemplated the supreme beauty. In melodies she heard the sweet breathing of God and she rejoiced in all the works of the Lord. Never was greater affection than hers, and by the sovereign love she bore to God she was bound to every creature, for all creatures she knew had One Creator."



Douceline was a beautiful soul and round her gathered a group of like-minded friends. From this group arose the communities of Roubaud and Marseilles, which both looked to Douceline as their foundress. They were probably Franciscan Tertiaries, of whom there were numbers in the south of France at that time, though whether they had formally taken the Franciscan habit seems uncertain. Of their spirit at least there is no doubt.

Douceline was, moreover, a greater power than perhaps she knew, and many people outside her own sphere consulted her. The king's brother, Charles of Anjou, even asked her advice when the crown of Sicily was offered to him; and she wrote to him afterwards, when his rule was not good, that "God still had twigs in His garden wherewith to punish him." Had Charles but listened to her words (who knows?) history might have taken a different course, with no dark tale of Sicilian Vespers to relate!

Every biographer of Saint Louis has been struck by his sense of justice and his admirably calm and clear judgments both of men and events. It was his keen desire for social justice and order which inspired all his legislation and reforms. Louis was a great lover of the law, as was shown in the "Establishments of Saint Louis," drawn up for him by his lawyers and which were based upon the Code of Justinian. He would perpetually question his own and any one else's legal right to possess some particular thing, or act in some given way. When, for instance, he and a large congregation were disturbed in listening to a sermon outside the parish church of Vitry by the noise of a tavern hard by, it was only when he was assured that he had the right to do so that he took steps to have the tavern removed.

There was the *cause célèbre* of Enguérrand de Couci, who had trusted to his position as one of the great feudal lords to unjustly hang three unfortunate boys caught poaching. The king took up the case in the most severe way, and in the trial that followed the feudal nobility had the opportunity of realising how little their privileges could mean. Enguérrand had every opportunity of defending himself on legal grounds, but the trial by battle which he demanded was refused. The king cared nothing for public opinion or the anger of the nobles; he only meant to do one thing, "chastise them that do evil." Enguérrand narrowly escaped the death penalty. He was exiled for three years, lost his right to execute justice, and had to build and endow three chapels where the souls of his victims should be prayed for, and the wood where the crime had been committed was taken from him and given to a neighbouring abbey. In this and other cases the feudal nobility learnt the weight of the king's sceptre.

His justice, moreover, was accessible to all. "A chacun son droit," he used to say, and nearly every day he sat beneath the oak in the wood at Vincennes, or in the Jardin de Paris, and all and sundry would bring him their wrongs and receive a hearing. One day a poor woman who was involved in a lawsuit, in a fit of anger cried out: "Oh, who are you to be King of France! Far better would it be if another were in your place, for you are always busy with the Friars Minor and the Friars Preachers, and the clergy, and it is surely a great pity you should be king and a great wonder that you have not been put out of the realm." The bystanders fell on her and would have beaten her and driven her away, but the king answered: "Assuredly you say well; I am not worthy to be king, and if it had not pleased Our Lord

Jesus Christ to set me on the throne, it had indeed been better that another should be king who would have known how to rule better than I," and he ordered his chamberlain to give the woman money and send her away in peace. All Louis's ideas of his royal dignity and power were contained in those words, for he had been set in his place by God, and it was His service which he was performing in the work of government, and in that consisted all his dignity.

He waged incessant war upon all the unjust abuses of power, upon the bribery and corruption that went on, and he made the strictest laws against the buying and selling of offices. Even his coinage was proverbially good, and he was most exact in knowing precisely how his own money was spent. Under Louis the feudal custom of the judicial duel was abolished, and trial by law, with proofs and witnesses, put in its place. Everyone was to be equal in the matter of guilt and punishment.

Sometimes the king's idea of justice brought him into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities, for it was often extremely difficult to determine exactly where Cæsar's right began and ended. This was especially the case in the old question of investitures, where the Church acted not only as a spiritual but a civil power. In all matters between Church and State the king with an unfailing impartiality kept to whatever seemed to him right, and no man was ever less "priest-ridden" than Louis. He was determined in his refusal to help the Bishop of Auxerre enforce a sentence of excommunication, unless proofs were forthcoming that it was really deserved. When the Bishop of Chartres demanded something from him, Louis had no hesitation in pointing out that his dues had not been paid, and that the bishop had behaved as a most unworthy subject. There were

differences with the Bishops of Beauvais, Chartres, Paris, and the Archbishop of Rheims, and all these cases show how delicate were the relations between the spiritual and civil authorities, how complicated the legal points on both sides. There was, moreover, the ever-recurring question as to how much money the Pope could reasonably demand from France for the Crusade and other wars of the Holy See. It was Louis's sense of justice which enabled him to continue a faithful son of the Church, and at the same time a king ready to defend all the best interests of his country.

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Louis was the genuine lover of peace, but never of that counterfeit, "peace at any price." He knew very well what was worth fighting for, and drew the sword unflinchingly.

His domestic policy was directed entirely to promote peace between the feudal lords and the different classes of citizens, for he recognised the strong growing power of the burghers and the weakness of the feudal system. He was always ready to encourage what seemed to him progress wherever he saw it.

With his foreign policy Louis was most successful, both in the interests of France, and of the general European peace; that, too, at a time when he was faced with difficult decisions in every direction. The Papacy was engaged in the old struggle with the Empire, and with protagonists such as Gregory IX and Innocent IV on one side, and Frederick II on the other, the feud had become formidable. Repeatedly the King of France tried to act as peacemaker between the two, until the death of Frederick removed the chief enemy of the Holy See and ended the Hohen-

staufen power in Italy. In the subsequent confusion a lesser man than Louis might have sought personal aggrandisement, but he refused the crown of Sicily for himself and his sons on the ground that it was not his right, and that the sins of Frederick should not be visited on his heir and grandson, Conradin.

Later he allowed it to pass to his brother Charles, when Benevento and Tagliacozzo had cut short any hope in the south for an Italian line of Hohenstaufen. The imperial sun in Italy had set, and the new one of Anjou, supported successively by three French Popes, was already on the rise.

Louis's peaceful foreign policy was also extended to England, and he had always wished for definite peace between the two countries. After the lamentable rebellion of the Lusignans, it was Henry rather than Louis who would not come to any real settlement. Louis was not to be discouraged. He protested that his and Henry's children were cousins, and he was determined to make every possible concession to bring his wife's brother-in-law to a reasonable understanding. At last they met in 1254, and the four sisters, Queen Marguerite of France, the Queen of England, Beatrix of Anjou, and Sanctis of Cornwall, were again together. The two kings' common religious enthusiasm was a bond between them, and five years later the peace was concluded. Louis was prepared as usual to consider every claim in the light of strict justice; but in point of fact the treaty when finally drawn up secured certain definite rights to France. The King of England, though he acquired some territory, had to pay homage to the French Crown for his possessions. Louis's honesty and insight had led him to an agreement which was both morally and politically satisfactory. It surely says a good deal for the impression that he made upon the



English, that a few years later he was called in to arbitrate between Henry III and his own barons.

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King Louis the Saint, the lawgiver, the peace maker, would have been incomplete without Saint Louis the Crusader; and as Saint Francis had eagerly desired the conversion of the East, so throughout his life Louis had longed to wear the Cross of the soldiers for Christ. More than ever the East seemed to be threatening the West, for the Tartars were already sweeping over Eastern Europe and more than ever came the cry of

Jérusalem qui plaint et pleure  
Pour le secours qui trop demeure.

Frederick II had succeeded for a short time, by a treaty with the sultan in 1229, in reviving the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem, but the Christian army was routed at Gaza and almost all were murdered. The holy places were lost. It is not difficult to imagine what such news meant to Saint Louis. In 1244, when he lay dangerously ill, he first made the vow of the Crusade, but not until 1248 were all the arrangements for the government during his absence settled, and the preparations complete. On 12th June, in the church of Saint Denis, he received the banner of the fleur-de-lys, and the staff and scarf of the pilgrim. Barefoot he came back to Paris for a last Mass in Notre Dame, a last visit to the Sainte Chapelle, then, surrounded by immense cheering crowds, the king and his followers rode away. He turned aside to various monasteries on the way to ask for the prayers of the monks, and Salimbene saw him at the chapter-general of the Friars Minor at Sens. He describes the king's entrance into the church, dressed as a



pilgrim, more friar than knight, as he knelt before the altar, with the brothers around him. The minister-general, John of Parma, arose. "The king," he said, "is the greatest benefactor and defender of our Order, in Paris and all the kingdom, and every Franciscan shall celebrate four Masses for him and the cause of the Crusades, and if the Son of God shall call him out of this world to his Father, then the brothers shall pray all the more." From Sens the king went to the Franciscan convent at Vezélay, and finally in August the expedition set sail from Aigues Mortes.

During the journey the king constantly urged those about him to a more fervent devotion, and encouraged the sailors to go to Mass, gaily protesting his readiness to take his turn at pulling a rope, or at any other job that had to be done. When land was sighted King Louis stood at the prow of the vessel, with what feelings of hope and expectation! "My faithful friends," he called to his companions, "we shall be invincible if we stand united in love. It is by God's will that we have come hither so speedily. Remember it is not I who am king, not I who am Holy Church, I am but one man whose life will pass away like any other when God wills. All our future is secure. If we are conquered we shall rise to Heaven, God's martyrs; if we conquer, God's glory will be noised abroad, and that of France and of all Christendom. God who knows all has not raised me up in vain. He must have His great purpose. Let us fight for Christ, and He will triumph in us, and let it be His name and not ours to receive honour, glory, and blessing."

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After the army had landed there were delays; and indeed since Godfrey de Bouillon and Richard I no

Crusaders had shown the swift decision which was so necessary in dealing with an eastern foe. Unanimity of purpose and action alone could have made the campaign a success, and this was lacking. Delay only gave time for more difficulties to arise, and the Christian army was a pitiful network of conflicting interests and personalities. Few indeed had King Louis's singleness of purpose. All too often for the few who went out to fight for a moral cause the majority were like the crusader who said: "If we conquer we shall grow rich, if we die we shall go to Heaven."

Unfortunately, Louis did not bring to the Crusade that knowledge of human nature and those military qualities which had made him successful in his wars in France. He and the other Christian leaders understood nothing of the maze of political and geographical complications offered by the Near East, and which might have been to their advantage. All the numerous tribes and sects and nations were to them merely "the Infidels." Every opportunity arising from the political and racial divisions of Egyptians, Arabs, Syrians, and Turks passed by unheeded and undreamed of. Small victories succeeded defeats; Queen Marguérite's defence of Damietta, of which she had been left in charge, was gallant in the extreme, and gallant too was Louis's behaviour in the field, with his personal daring and contempt for danger. Joinville shows him to us: "As I was wounded, on foot with my men, the King came up with his bodyguard with a great cry and noise of trumpets and cymbals, and he reined in his horse on the road above us. Never have I seen a more goodly knight, for he was a head and shoulders above his men, a gilded helmet on his head, a German sword in his hand."

As a campaign the Crusade failed almost before it had begun, and sickness and disease raged in the Christian army. Prince Robert of Artois, William Longsword, and many others lay dead after the disastrous attack on Mansourah, and Louis himself with Joinville, Prince Alphonse de Poitiers, Philippe de Nemours, Peter of Brittany, and practically all the French army were captured. The king could scarcely ride, for he was grievously ill; but when Charles of Anjou urged him to allow himself to be put on a boat and treated as an invalid, his only cry was: "I will not desert my army." His capture at that moment was almost a blessing in disguise. The bulk of the army indeed suffered horribly at the hands of the emirs, who behaved like savages, and as many as three to four hundred of the rank and file died in one night for their faith, ruthlessly murdered. The king and the nobles had been kept apart by the sultan's order, and to Louis he certainly behaved more as a host than a captor, even as Saladin had done to Saint Francis. He saw to it that the sick king was well lodged, and the Saracen doctors treated him far more successfully than the French ones, "for their skill," says Louis's confessor, "was greater than ours." He was allowed his chaplain, and during the trials that followed "the King's faith and charity burned always more brightly." He had hardly any clothes save a poor old cloak, but the sultan sent him all he needed, and also presents for the queen shut up in Damietta.

Such was the wildness of the Saracen army that the sultan was murdered one night by his own men, and the Christian prisoners had the narrowest of escapes. Finally, after a couple of months, a treaty was signed whereby the French army was to be ransomed for £500,000, and the king begged to be

kept as hostage, if only his men might go free. His idea, not of himself but of the consecrated royal dignity, was so high that, to use his own words, "he was not of such that could be redeemed with money," and the evacuation of Damietta was the price demanded for his liberty. At last the negotiations were ended. Joinville had wrung the ransom out of the Knights Templars, and he tells how Philippe de Nemours came on board boasting that the Saracens had been paid ten thousand crowns too little. "I trod on Sir Philippe's foot," says Joinville, "for I saw he had caught the King's attention, and I said he was but jesting, for the Saracens are the best calculators in the world." "An ill-timed jest," returned the king, and he ordered Philippe to see to it that the ransom was paid in full. No hostage in the end was necessary, and the prisoners set sail to join the queen and her followers who had left Damietta, and as Joinville says, no doubt truly, "The joy was as great as it could be."

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From the point of view of conquest the Crusade was over. At the Council of Acre, held just after the king's release, the overwhelming majority was in favour of an immediate return to France, but Louis could not give up the idea for which he had come—Jerusalem. Throughout the Crusade he was not so much the king, statesman, or soldier, as the pilgrim. Jerusalem and Bethlehem lay indeed inaccessible behind the mountains, and there he never entered, but he was able to reach Nazareth by way of Cana and Mount Tabor. He rode up the hills of Galilee fasting, and wearing a hair shirt, and at the first sight of Nazareth he dismounted and fell on his knees. He went on foot to the church of the Annunciation,

still guarded by the Christians, and there he heard Vespers, Matins, and next day High Mass. The hours he spent in that church, and in the streets of Nazareth, or looking out at the Galilean hills, those hours so full of memories and emotion, were surely for Saint Louis the reward for what he had suffered for the holy places. Of all pilgrims, he found that which he had come to seek.

In 1252 came the news of Queen Blanche's death, which made Louis's return home imperative. In that same year he lost what political footing might have been his in Syria, and after many hesitations it was clear even to the king that his duty now lay in France.

The army marched from Jaffa to Sidon, and it was there that Louis's gallantry showed itself again for the soldiers of the Cross. As the Christian army marched along they found some two thousand of their own dead who had lain unburied for more than a month beneath the summer sun. "Come, let us bury the martyrs of Christ," called the king; "they have suffered more than we have for God"; and he was the first to set the example. The work lasted for five days, and the king was always at his place in the trench.

In 1253 the French moved on to Acre, whence on 27 April the king and queen set sail; and Joinville, who during these years had never left Louis's side, turned to him with congratulations upon his "second birthday, for you are surely born again this day when you escape from this perilous land." Louis's achievement had been very different from that of Richard I, and yet as he saw the shores of Palestine grow faint he may well have echoed Richard's words: "Farewell, my Holy Land, to God I do commend thee, yet I will come again." And when



he disembarked at Marseilles it was noticed that he was still wearing the Cross.

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Fifteen years of continuous effort and unceasing labour for his people followed the king's return from the Holy Land, years that were fruitful in every field of government and reform. The king's work, though, was nearly done, and secretly his face was set towards Jerusalem.

News from Syria went from bad to worse, and the last stand of the Latin kingdom seemed to have been reached. Louis wrote and asked the Pope's advice, but Clement hesitated, knowing well the value of the king's rule to France. In 1267 Louis summoned his nobles and announced his intention of again taking the Cross. Joinville dreamed of him kneeling before the altar and many prelates in their robes were clothing him in a crimson chasuble of Rheims cloth. "I called Master William, my priest and a most sagacious man, and told him my vision, to which he said: 'Sire, you will see the King will take the Cross to-morrow, for the crimson chasuble signifies the Cross red with the Blood which fell from the Hands and Feet and Side of God. That the chasuble was made of serge foretells that this Crusade will be no great or glorious enterprise, as we shall see if God gives us life.'"

Next day, indeed, the king and his three sons took the Cross. Joinville refused, on the plea that he could not again leave his vast estates to look after themselves, and that his first duty was to care for his people. A certain number of nobles responded to the king's appeal, but it was a faint-hearted undertaking, and though Edward I promised help, it was not forthcoming till too late. Finally, in 1270, the expedition



was ready. The king himself was so unwell that Joinville carried him in his arms, amid general lamentations, from the house of the Count of Auxerre to that of the Franciscans, where he left him. At Vincennes Louis parted from Queen Marguerite "with many mutual tears," and on 26 June he and his small army embarked on Genoese vessels again from Aigues Mortes.

Originally Louis had intended to sail for Syria, but partly the hope of converting the Sultan of Tunis, partly Charles of Anjou's political manœuvres, caused him to change his course for Africa. The king was absorbed by the idea of converting his foes, the army by that of conquering them; and meanwhile the Moors harassed the disorganised foreign camps, in which indeed there had never been any real cohesion. The climate did the rest—the burning African sun and, worse still, the burning winds and sand of the desert. The Europeans fell before them, and an epidemic of fever was the result. Many died, including Prince John de Nevers, the Count de la Marche, Ralph de Soissons, Walther de Nemours, and how many more! Louis fell ill on 3 August. Sister Death, whom he had come to find, was at the door. On the 11th he heard of his son John's death, and the news caused a relapse, for he had appeared to be slightly better. He never expected to recover, and at once wound up his worldly affairs, and gave his son Philippe the letter he had written for him. He asked that he should be buried at Saint Denis, and his son John at Royaumont. His tomb was to be without ornaments or sculpture. After the 20th he spoke but little; on the 24th he received the last sacraments, somehow dragging himself out of bed to kneel before the Host. "We pray thee, Lord, that we may despise the joys of this world and never

tremble at its sorrows." "Lord, have pity on the people I have led here, and send them to their homes in safety," he repeated with other snatches of prayer; and as he drifted into unconsciousness his confessor caught the words: "I will enter into Thy house, O Lord; I will worship in Thy holy temple, and confess the name of the Lord." "Jerusalem—Jerusalem." And indeed the gates of the heavenly city were opening to him. He revived again sufficiently to be laid on the ground on a bed of cinders, as he had always desired, and, covered with a sack in the form of a cross, at 3 p.m. on 25 August the soul of King Louis went back to God.

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The king died as the ships of his brother, Charles of Anjou, entered the harbour. Sorrow and confusion were everywhere. "My lord and my brother," Charles cried beside the smiling face of Louis. The army insisted that they should escort the body back to France, and the difficult journey began, only to reach Paris on 21 May, 1271. Many miracles happened on the way; visions of the king in glory were seen by many; and when he was finally laid to rest, his graces and virtues were on every tongue, and France was claiming for him the official title of Saint. The Pope sent two cardinals to inquire into the matter and examine the numerous witnesses, foremost amongst whom was Joinville. Sixty-three cases of miracles were carefully certified, and in 1297 the cause of canonisation was completed under Boniface VIII.

Saint Louis had written in earlier years to his daughter: "Dear daughter, let one desire never leave your heart, the desire to please God, Our Lord, and so dispose your heart that if you were certain never

to be rewarded for any good you should do, or punished for any evil, yet all the same you would keep yourself from anything that displeased Him, and give your heart to all that might please Him, as far as in you lay, and this solely for love of Him."

That was how Saint Louis himself lived throughout his life, in all his numerous cares and responsibilities, and his words on the first Crusade were also a prophecy: "God who knows all has not raised me up in vain."

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"Deus, qui beatum Ludovicum, confessorum tuum de terreno ac temporali regno ad coelestis et aeterni gloriam transalisti, ejus quaesumus meritis et intercessione Regis regum Jesu Christi Fili Tui nos cohaeredes efficias et ejusdem regni tribuas esse consortis per eundem Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum."

*Roman Breviary.*



CHAPTER V  
BLESSED RAMON LULL  
1235-1315

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## BLESSED RAMON LULL

### PROTO-MARTYR OF THE THIRD ORDER

IN foco d'amor mi mise  
Il Sposo mio novello  
Quando l'anel mi mise.

That was the secret of Saint Francis, and the fire of love it was that caught and fashioned the spirit of Ramon Lull. He was born in Palma somewhere between 1231-5 of an old Catalonian family. His father had left his estates on the mainland to accompany Jaime I in his conquest of Malloria, and having been given considerable land on the island, he chose to remain there with his wife, Isabel de Héril, like himself of the old Catalonian nobility. Ramon was the child of many hopes and prayers, for his parents had been married several years before his birth. He came into the world with the proverbial gold spoon in his mouth. Position, money, success—life held out all this to the young Ramon; he was good-looking, intelligent, and full of charm; one of the world's spoilt children. The atmosphere of the Lull home was one of culture, refinement, and sincere Christian piety, and he had all the love and care that two devoted parents could lavish on an only son.

Ramon has left us a delightful picture of his mother in the figure of Aloma in *Blanquerna*, and his father was a well-educated, artistic man. The Catalonian and Aragonese nobility of that time shared all the culture of the south of France; the art of the troubadours and trouvères had found a home in the Spanish peninsula. Alfonso II,

Pedro II, and Pedro III were troubadours, and the reign of Jaime I produced a rich harvest of poetry. The Albigensian Crusade of the north against the south of France had not only brought destruction to the heretics; it also drove many of the best and most enlightened spirits of the south to seek for shelter outside their native land. Numbers of them went to Spain, where they were received with hospitality, and they took with them the customs and traditions of the *gaye science*. They were at the court of Jaime I, and as a child, Ramon Lull, like Saint Francis, must often have dreamed of the courts of love, of the knights and ladies, and all the glorious exploits of romance. The tenderness and charm of the Provençal songs unconsciously formed the boy's literary taste; he was—what he always remained—a poet.

Ramon Lull the elder naturally looked forward to a splendid career for his brilliant son, and was probably only too glad at fourteen to send him to court as a page. He has left many descriptions of his life there, and as the friend and playmate of the princes he travelled with the king over all Catalonia and Aragon. Freed from the tutor and school routine, the keen, intelligent boy was interested in everything he saw. He learnt the science of war and politics as they were practised in Spain, and, above all, he learnt to know and judge his fellow-men. He was a universal favourite, a dashing, gorgeous young man, a leader in all the revels, a conqueror of hearts.

His love affairs were endless and the minstrels of Provence had in him a worthy brother. Poetical expression came to him naturally, though he destroyed all his early verse when the devouring flame of Divine Love seized him. It is in his later works that we see how great his lyrical talent was, and often the old

charm and humour flashes out, as Lull the troubadour sings the praises of Love.

In 1256, four years after the death of another great Franciscan Tertiary, Saint Ferdinand of Spain, Jaime I sent his second son, the Infant Jaime, as governor to Majorca, of which Jaime was to become king at his father's death, and he appointed Ramon Lull his seneschal and major-domo. Perhaps the young man's escapades had come too often to the king's notice; but in giving him this post he warned him that his life must now become more decorous, and suggested that he should marry an orphan heiress, Blanche de Picany, who had large estates on the island. Two children were born of the marriage, Magdaleine and Domingo, for whom in after years his father wrote the *Doctrine for Boys*, a small item in Lull's colossal work, but the first catechism of its kind ever written for children.

Marriage, unfortunately, did not mean that Lull gave up his former wild life; if anything it increased. His loves were notorious, and even his friends were scandalised. It seemed as though he were obsessed by the feverish desire for enjoyment, pleasure, and excitement. The story is told that a young and beautiful woman, Ambrosia de Castellò, took his fancy, but though he offered her all the ardour of his admiration and passion, she remained cold and untouched. Her attitude only fanned the fire in Ramon; and one night as he sat writing her a love-letter in verse he suddenly saw at his right hand Christ on the Cross, obviously suffering intensely. He was afraid, and put the poem aside and went to bed, but woke up next morning with no thought of the vision, and went on his way through the day, gaily and carelessly as usual. That evening the vision was repeated, and twice during the following week,

but nothing could interrupt the thought of Ambrosia which filled his mind. The poems were finished and sent to her. Hitherto she had only answered him by silence, but this time she wrote him a dignified letter of refusal. Lull, blinded by passion, saw in it the first signs of surrender, and was triumphant.

It was the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, and as Lull was riding across the square of Palma he saw Ambrosia go into the church of Santa Eulalia. Regardless of any decency he urged his horse up the steps, through the main door, and followed her up the middle of the nave. That evening she sent him a message that she expected him, and he answered in person instantly, little dreaming that he was at the cross-roads of his life.

Ambrosia received him in tears. "Wretched man," she exclaimed, "do you think that I share your criminal passion? Is it worthy that a soul created to know and love God should so allow itself to be misled as to adore a creature? I have told you that I am ready to show you the body whose beauty you have sung, if a sight of this miserable flesh may move you and make you mindful of all the duties that you forget." She opened her dress and showed Lull her breast horribly consumed and inflamed by cancer. "See, here is the fragile beauty of earth, dead before it dies. It is but your own imagination which caused you to forget the Eternal God, the only Beauty and Perfection." With this she left him, thunder-struck, undone.

That night in his own room Ramon stammered words he had almost forgotten; prayers for which he could find no expression. For the fifth time "Jesus Christ in His great pity" appeared to him, and he heard the words: "Ramon, follow Me."

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It may be that this account of Lull's conversion is made up from two distinct episodes having no direct connection. In substance, however, it is certainly true, and in later life Lull could say: "It was Thy Passion, O Lord, that aroused and awakened Thy servant when he was dead in mortal sin." It seems likely, therefore, that it was chiefly the terrible thrice-repeated vision of Christ crucified which determined the change in Lull's life. From this shattering experience, whether or no it was immediately combined with his passion for Ambrosia, Lull emerged a new man, and his conversion, as overwhelming as that of Saint Paul, brings irresistibly to our mind the story of that other great Franciscan penitent, Jacopone.

Lull and Jacopone have many things in common. Their conversions must have taken place within a few years of each other, Lull's about 1262, when the Catalonian courtier was nearing thirty, and the clever luxurious Umbrian lawyer's in 1268, when he was about forty. They did not know each other, but they both turned in an agony of repentance and humility to seek for the Folly of the Cross, and to follow the Banner of Love which has for its emblem the "Sign of One Dead." Their eyes were newly opened upon the vision of the Love of God, henceforth for both the way was the same, to die to the past, and to themselves, in Jacopone's words:

Non posso esser renato  
Se io en men non so morto.

Jacopone's mentality was very different from Lull's; his interests were not so wide, his intellectual field more restricted. Each went through the fire of conversion with its violent reactions, each was a poet of the Love of God. Both were seized by the

fire of Love that Saint Francis had known and preached, and it transformed their whole lives. The magnificent concentration and swing of Jacopone's finest *laudi* with their sustained sweeping power find a counterpart in Lull's religious verse, which at times is closely akin to that of his Umbrian brother. Jacopone's lyrical talent was nurtured by the Provençal tradition developed in an Italian *milieu*, just as that of Ramon Lull was influenced by the Spanish troubadours and by the Arabic poets. Jacopone's only literary self-expression was in his *laudi*, into which he poured all the molten stream of his genius; whereas Lull, the teacher, scientist, and philosopher, spread his inspiration over a vast region of learning and speculation.

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Ramon Lull's conversion was complete. Humbly he made his confession while the town rang with the news. It was a nine-days wonder; and he who had but lately ridden into the church with such effrontery received in tears the reproaches and jeers that were heaped upon him. It is said that as he went home in the dusk of one of the first days of his convert life a new vision met him, not of Christ on the Cross, but of the Blessed Virgin who, smiling, held the Child Jesus for Lull to kiss.

The difficult inner work began, and Lull knew all the agonising process of tearing his passions up by the roots, and seeing himself for the first time in the light of Truth. His anguish was so great, for he knew his nature to be contrary to any penance. He could but implore the help of God in his extremity: "Thy blessing alone can help me, that I may love Thee more than myself and any created thing. Oh, give me all that is lacking in me of love, and then



indeed I can begin to love Thee perfectly, and to repent of my sins; Thy Love will bring the words of true confession to my lips and let me praise Thee. Then my eyes will be able to weep and my hands give to the poor the alms I have so long refused them. Sleeping and waking, in action or at rest, let my heart be only set upon the remembrance of Thy Love and Passion, and let me have no desire but to glorify and praise Thee, who art our Lord and our God. Life was given me that I might know and honour God, but I fell into grievous sin and exposed myself to the just vengeance of God. Jesus came to me crucified and it is He who willed that I should love Him."

In after years Lull defined sin as the "turning and directing of the intention away from the final Cause and Intention for which all things have been created by my Beloved." He felt his own share in sin to have been intensely acute and personal—no vague participation in a general movement, but a wound and injury and insult which he had offered to his Beloved. He knew he had been forgiven, but he could not forgive himself.

As in the case of Blessed Angela, the whole strength of Lull's will was engaged in the struggle; all that he asked for as a reward was the crown of martyrdom. He had given up his appointment at court soon after his conversion; and when the first terrible crisis was passed he looked round, as it were, upon a world made new. One only question occupied his mind—how was he to answer the call, "Ramon, follow Me"? He saw a large part of Spain and Northern Africa under Moorish rule, he thought of the Crescent floating in triumph over the distant Holy Land, and the missionary fever seized him. He saw himself already travelling, preaching, converting, baptising, and then despair would catch him; what could he

do? What would he be ever capable of but to do penance for his sins in the seclusion of some convent?

He dreamed of a Crusade; what fervent Christian did not? Saint Louis was still alive; there were yet hopes of rescuing the holy places. But Lull's ideas of a Crusade were not only military; he saw the whole matter in the light of that spiritual common sense which always distinguished him, for he could say: "Wherefore it appears to me, O Lord, that the conquest of that sacred land will not be achieved save by love and prayer and the shedding of tears as well as blood. . . . We must put an end to the material war between Christians and Saracens, because so long as it lasts neither side can begin those peaceful discussions which will certainly result in the triumph of the Cross." Those words come from a singularly enlightened mind; and all his life Lull never wavered from the conviction that the Moslem world must be won, not only conquered; won by personal sacrifice, and by the Spirit of God working through knowledge and preaching.

To preach and convert one must have learning, and Ramon was far too intelligent not to realise all that he lacked. The example was recent when some Christians had entered into public dispute with the followers of Mohammed and been overcome by their arguments. Such a scandal must not be repeated; but to avoid it the Christians had need of all their virtue and all their intelligence. During the thirteenth century Islam had shone with the ascetic lives and writings of some of its devotees. Especially the saintly Jellalud'-Din had given a mystical impulse to his disciples, and his spirituality was somewhat akin to that of Christians like Ramon Lull. He too thirsted for truth, and from afar was a servant of Love; he too would have followed Lady Poverty,

and his life and teaching inspired many of the most spiritually minded followers of the prophet. Lull certainly knew the best and worst of Mohammedan life at first hand; he saw all its errors, and his one longing was to find the means of proclaiming the truth of Christianity, the glorious news of the Gospel. With regret he thought of his wasted school years. "The Lover considered the past and he wept over all that he had lost, and no one could console him, for his losses were irreparable." He retired into solitude and gave himself up anew to penance and mortification. It was but a few months after his conversion, and on 4 October he went into the church of Saint Francis and heard the preacher extol the life and character of the Seraphic Father. Lull was deeply moved. His spiritual ambitions were vast as those of Saint Paul; he now saw in Saint Francis the guide for whom he was seeking, and resolved that he too would take Poverty for his bride and follow wherever she should lead him.

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At that time the Franciscan movement had taken a firm hold in Spain. Saint Francis himself with Bernard of Quintavalle had been there in 1215, and only illness deterred him from going on to Morocco. Tradition says that he visited the shrine of Saint James at Compostela, and founded the house of Burgos on his way to Montpellier. Certainly Spain was prominently in his mind when he had the great vision of what his Order would be, and the Franciscan message spread quickly along the Mediterranean shores. It must be remembered that in those days two classes of people travelled continually, merchants and pilgrims; and new ideas hastened along the great southern trade routes. Shrines such as Rome, Saint

Nicholas of Bari, Saint James of Compostela, Sainte Beaume, were not only centres of devotion but meeting-places of the nations; and the followers of Saint Francis were soon well known throughout Spain, France, and Provence. Like their master they longed to reach the Saracen world, and in 1219 five of the brothers succeeded in crossing to Morocco. There they found the martyrdom for which they longed, an event which led the Augustinian canon of Coimbra, afterwards known as Saint Anthony, to join the Franciscan Order. Lull must have heard the story of Saint Francis while he was still a boy, and he had probably been influenced far more than he knew by the Franciscan ideals.

Roughly and coarsely dressed, he was now himself a pilgrim, like many a Franciscan brother, though his formal reception into the Third Order took place many years later.

He left Majorca, travelling slowly from place to place till he reached Compostela, begging his bread and speaking to all of the Love of God. "The harder and narrower the path by which the lover reaches his Beloved the greater is the delight of Love." Thus did he speak of this journey, during which he slept where he could and ate what was offered him; he who had so enjoyed comfort and luxury, and the good things of the earth. Some would say to him: "Poor pilgrim, it is very cold, here is a thicker garment"; and he would answer: "I am clothed with a poor thin cloak, but Love clothes my heart with pleasant thoughts and my body with a mantle of tears and suffering." Or they said: "Whither art thou bound with no companion or guide? Thou wilt surely lose the way, for the path is narrow, far from the road where bands of pilgrims pass, and thou wilt die, poor man, in the forests and darkness"; and he

would answer: "Love guides me and directs me towards the country where there is no night."

He went to Montserrat to visit the shrine of Our Lady, and for two years he journeyed far and wide, reaching, it is said, Rome and Palestine. During those long months of pilgrimage, with solitary nights beneath the stars, in the forests and fields, by the sea and on the mountain tops, praying alone in some great sanctuary or solitary country chapel, Lull found himself, and was able to put the past behind him, and face the future. In 1265 he was back in Barcelona, and sought counsel of the great Dominican, Saint Raymond de Penyafort, who was the dominating religious personality of Spain. Many infidels had been converted by his eloquence and powers of persuasion, and he had established colleges for the study of Hebrew and Arabic where the Friars Preachers could prepare for their missions. Lull, only too well aware of his own ignorance, sought his advice whether or no he should go to the University of Paris and study theology and the sciences that he lacked. Did Saint Raymond read all that was hidden from the pilgrim concerning himself? His advice was definite: "It is useless for you to go to Paris; return to Palma, where you must show to all whom you have scandalised the example of virtue. Meditate and pray in solitude and God will give you the knowledge that you need."

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Ramon at once went back to Palma, to his wife and children, but he no longer led his former life. The royal seneschal had to endure what was surely a hard trial—the suspicion, dislike, and ridicule of his friends and relations, whose attitude it is easy to imagine. He was not yet famous, neither monk nor



priest, and to the outside world just a half-crazed fool who had ruined his own life and that of his family. All his time was given up to study. He learnt Arabic from a Moorish slave whom he hoped to convert, but who on the contrary tried to murder him; and it was then that he began his first colossal book, *The Art of Contemplation*.

It is surely one of the most remarkable first books in the history of literature, an encyclopædia rather than a book, which reveals the originality and great horizon of Lull's genius. In it he tells of the life of courts, of all manner of men, and discusses many different philosophical and scientific theories. It is an immense apologia for the Christian faith; and Lull knew well enough how to lash timid or lazy Christians. In the long section on Love and Prayer he tells of the inner life as he beheld it, an inner life which, if lived consistently, could not, he thought, fail to convert the unbeliever.

It was probably during the composition of *The Art of Contemplation* that Lull retired to a hermitage upon Mount Randa, for the "Lover longed for solitude, and went away to live alone that he might gain the companionship of his Beloved, for amid many people he was lonely." His periods of seclusion there, with intervals probably spent in Palma or at a neighbouring monastery, were the most purely contemplative of his whole career and lasted about ten years. The hill of Randa is a spot whose beauty and solitude might well lead the spirit of man into the way of contemplation, and the time Lull spent there was perhaps the happiest of his life.

His acute penitential period was over, and his spiritual powers could now grow unhindered. It was a time of peace and of new and wonderful experience. "The Beloved created and the Lover destroyed.



The Beloved judged and the Lover wept. Then the Beloved created glory again for the Lover. The Beloved finished His work and the Lover remained for ever in the companionship of his Beloved."

Lull looked out upon all the beauty that surrounded him and which spoke to him of the unique Beauty and Being of the Creator, which "is a bright ray throughout all things even as the sun which shines over all the world." Most wonderful of all he felt himself to be a child of God, no longer cut off from his Beloved, for "Love shone through the cloud which came between the Lover and the Beloved, and made it bright and resplendent as is the moon by night, as the day-star at dawn, the sun at midday, the understanding in the will; and through that bright cloud the Lover and the Beloved held converse." His heart was filled with humble thankfulness, and he turned to all the other creatures of God, the trees and plants, the birds and insects. Like Saint Francis he called upon them, that together with him they might praise his Beloved: "Say, thou bird that singest, hast thou placed thyself in the care of my Beloved, that He may guard thee from indifference and increase in thee thy love?" The bird replied: "And who makes me to sing but the Lord of Love, to whom not to love is to sin?" The birds hymned the dawn and the Beloved, who is the Dawn, awakened. And the birds ended their song and the Lover died in the dawn for his Beloved.

"Say, thou bird that singest of love, why does my Beloved, He who has made me His servant, do nought but torture me now?" And the bird replied: "If Love made thee not to bear trials, what couldst thou give to show thy love of Him?"

The bird sang upon a branch in leaf and flower, and the breeze caused the leaves to tremble and bore

away the scent of the flowers. "What means the trembling of the leaves and the scent of the flowers?" asked the bird of the Lover. He answered: "The trembling of the leaves signifies obedience and the scent of the flowers adversity." The bird sang in the garden of the Beloved. The lover came, and he said to the bird: "If we cannot understand one another's speech we may make ourselves understood by love, for in thy song I see my Beloved before mine eyes."

The rainbow was to him the living symbol of the Blessed Trinity; the sunset and the dawn, all the changing pageant of earth and sky and sea, filled his mind with peace and joy and praise, and spoke to him of God. From the wonders of creation he rose to a sphere where all earthly things are left behind, while through the Humanity of his Beloved he reached to His Divinity, saying: "The Lover beat upon his Beloved's door with blows of love and hope. The Beloved heard his Lover's blows with humility, piety, charity, and patience. Deity and Humanity opened the doors and the Lover went in to his Beloved. Deity and Humanity met and joined together to make concord between Lover and Beloved." He could then say to the sun that he no longer needed his help or glory to offer to the Beloved, for the essence of Love itself with which God filled his soul, was sufficient to teach him all the art of love. Often, Lull says, his body was like a wooden or stone statue, motionless and inactive, while his spirit soared into those other regions which no human words can describe, and he could but call to others: "Oh ye that love, if ye will have fire, come light your lanterns at my heart; if water, come to my eyes whence flow the tears in streams; if thoughts of love, come gather them from my meditations."

Upon the heights of Mount Randa Lull's soul was divinely illumined and his whole mission revealed to him. Tradition tells of his visions of Christ, of his familiar converse with Our Lord, but who shall say with certainty under what form the servitor of Love met his Master? There are legends of the heavenly Shepherd who came and taught him, and of the leaves of the lentisk suddenly covered with the characters of Greek, Latin, Arabic, Hebrew, and Chaldean, signifying that his works were for all these peoples. Surely if these be legends they are also allegories.

A new phase was about to open in Ramon's life; and perhaps foreseeing that henceforth, materially at least, he could be of no use to his wife and children, he went down to Palma to see them. He was met with abuse from his former friends, because "he seemed to be mad with love," but "the Lover cared nothing for their insults, and only reproached men for not loving his Beloved."

His wife wisely sought for an order, still extant in the library of Palma, from the civil authorities, by which the administration of his property was taken out of Lull's hands and given over to a relation of Blanche's who had offered to undertake it. "Having diligently inquired," it runs, "into the life and manners of the said Lord Ramon Lull, it is evident to us that he has chosen the contemplative life, and no longer intends to attend to the business of his fortune and possessions."

To Ramon had come the call to leave all, even his wife and children, and he had obeyed it.

Once again in the solitude of Mount Randa Lull gave himself up feverishly to writing and even before the *Art of Contemplation* was finished, the *Book of*

*the Gentile and of the Three Wise Men* and the *Ars Magna* were begun. The *Book of the Gentile* is in far lighter vein than the *Ars*, and it contains many charming passages and delightful inventions. It deals with the beliefs of Christian, Jew, and Saracen, all set out before the unbelieving philosopher with great fairness. With his own deep convictions and fiery longing to convert others, this consideration and courtesy remained with Lull to the end of his life. He always respected the sincere conviction and good faith of those who differed from him.

When first one opens Ramon Lull's *Ars Magna*, always considered by him his greatest work, it is, to the initiated at least, like entering a jungle of wonderful tropical plants where any sort of path is extraordinarily difficult to find. The mass of words, of diagrams, circles, and triangles, appears such a maze; the perpetual use of syllogisms is to us so strange a method that it seems as though one would never find the clear sky through this tangle of branches. We are brought up here for the first time against the astounding richness and originality of Lull's mind. He is like Roger Bacon in his scientific curiosity, and even more approaches Leonardo in his reaching after the fantastic, in his glad embrace of every problem and every question suggested by the moral and material world.

For us who are not students of Lull's scientific method (and that would be the study of a lifetime), the only practical plan seems to be to try to grasp his fundamental idea, and superficially to understand the chief line of his argument in its relation to the rest of his work.

His dominant thought was to establish the principles of a general science, in which every other particular one would find its place and one vast harmony arise,

perfect and complete. He sought for a method by which all knowledge should be reduced to a small number of general principles, and thus united, all the different arts and sciences would present the luminous proof of the conciliation of Christian dogma with all natural and psychological phenomena. Of science in the positive sense there was none, and Lull had but little of Bacon's faculty of scientific criticism. The *Ars* puts too great confidence in the power of reason, and deduction, not from observed facts but from mere human words. Yet Lull is for ever doubting pure philosophical assertion, and even in the face of the schoolmen dares to oppose Aristotle on many points. He will not accept the Aristotelian categories, such as quality and quantity, but places at the base of his *Ars* nine principles, which are the attributes of God. To them he adds nine other principles, such as Difference, Continuity, Beginning, End, etc. To Lull these principles were not abstractions but realities, almost personified in his vivid imagination. He enumerates them with all their logical consequences, defining the results, and from their endless variety he seeks to prove the ultimate union of all in God—a union which does not sacrifice individuality, but rather is its supreme crown.

After thus laying the foundation of his universal science, Lull treats of the separate sciences, dividing them into fourteen trees—the Elementary tree; the Vegetable, the Sensual, which gives us knowledge of all natural things through our senses; the Imaginative, which deals with the impressions made upon our minds by the natural world; the Human tree, dealing with the union in man of soul and body; the Moral, treating of man's virtues and vices; the Imperial, which is a treatise on politics and the art of government; the Apostolic, that is the tree of the



Church; the Celestial tree, in which he studies the heavenly beings and their relation to man; the Angelic tree; the Eternal tree of Heaven and Hell; the Maternal tree of the being and virtues of the Blessed Virgin; the tree of the Divinity and Humanity of Our Lord; and the Divine tree of God. All the trees are divided into trunks, branches, leaves, and flowers, and these few bald words give, in all they imply, but a faint idea of the vast stretch of Lull's mind and the fertility of his imagination. Written in the thirteenth century it was a marvellous achievement of thought and inquiry.

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The years at Randa had taught all this and more to Ramon Lull, and in 1275 he felt that his purely contemplative life must end, and that he was being called to a more active form of service. Like Saint Francis, the "life of angels" was not for him. To preach and persuade, to convert and win souls for Christ, such was his thought; and as he looked out to sea his love and longing were wide as the horizon. The practical means for realising his ideal seemed to him threefold: a new Crusade, not so much material as intellectual; the formation of an army of missionaries to preach to Jews, Mohammedans, and heathen, and prove the truth of the Christian religion in their words and lives; and the establishment of colleges for the necessary studies. His first preaching efforts were successful and some notable conversions followed among the Jews. Hearing of them, Lull's old friend Jaime I summoned him to Montpellier, where he was examined in theology by the Franciscan Bertrand de Bérenger. His lectures were listened to with respect, but scholastic success was not what he sought. He, the "Doctor Illuminatus," would rather go



through the streets, speaking to the people, in no academic phrases, but in homely, vivid language, telling them the story of the endless Love of God.

Montpellier was then one of the cosmopolitan intellectual and commercial cities of Europe. Merchants and scholars thronged its streets; it was one of the chief Franciscan centres of Europe, and Lull found there a ready welcome. Prince Jaime, his former companion, who at first had probably been sceptical about his friend's conversion, was moved by Ramon's words, and even more by his devotion. In later years he, too, was to feel yet more closely what the religious call could mean, when his own eldest son renounced his heritage to become a Friar Minor, and Ramon's example may well have influenced the young prince. He found Jaime ready to be interested in all his schemes. He was encouraged to write other books, and produced the *Book of Demonstrations*, the *Order of Chivalry*, and the *Doctrine for Boys*, written for his own son, for Lull's natural love had not died, only been transformed in a greater. The *Doctrine for Boys* is interesting as it shows his ideas on education, and as a reaction from his own gay youth, his son was loaded with puritanical advice.

Above all, the prince encouraged Lull's missionary schemes, and it was thanks to his generosity that the college of Miramare in Majorca was established, where thirteen friars were to be trained for the mission field under Lull's direction. The prince had now become King James II on the death of his father, and in 1276 he received the formal sanction, for his foundation from Pope John XXI in a bull dated from Viterbo. At Miramare Lull threw his whole strength into the work of organising the school, into his life of teaching and prayer. Several of his

works of this time have been lost, but he wrote some of his finest Catalanian poems, the *Lament of Our Lady Saint Mary*, the *Hours of Our Lady*, and the *Book of the Holy Spirit*.

At Miramare Lull dreamed of increasing plans for the religious education of Christians, and the conversion of all outside the faith. For ignorance he had no use; he knew its dangers too well, and ill-prepared missionaries were to him worse than useless. He longed for a great multitude of "wise lovers." Once the Miramare college was well established, Lull left for another preaching tour. Above all he wished to lay all his plans and hopes before the Roman court. There he obtained a hearing, but hardly the satisfaction for which he longed. Pope Nicholas III obviously thought him a dreamer, and for the moment the most that he would grant was the sending of five missionaries to the Tartars. Lull therefore left Rome and started on a journey to excite the zeal of all the princes of Europe, and to see for himself the conditions of life, the belief and manners of heathen countries. "The Lover had a long journey before him, hard and difficult, and the moment had come to start, and to shoulder the heavy burden that Love asks His friends to carry. Therefore the Lover put off from his mind all thoughts and from his hands all comforts, that his body might be the better able to bear its load and that his soul should journey only in company with his Beloved."

Did Lull realise the vastness of his dreams and the enormous difficulties, both moral and material, which lay before him?

Hardly; nor, if he had, would they have deterred him. Like Saint Paul and Saint Francis, his eyes were fixed upon the distant ideal, a world won to Christ; all the intervening space and obstacles

disappeared. He did not stop to think of himself, a solitary, middle-aged man starting forth upon a crusade as hazardous as any which had lured men to Palestine. He saw his immediate path clearly marked out. He asked no more and the future belonged to God.

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There were plenty of wandering preachers in those days; many who passed Lull on the road or heard him preach at street corners, in fairs, anywhere and everywhere that he could find a few listeners, doubtless thought him a crank, though often enough they might be struck by his eloquence and picturesque, direct language. Travel-stained, ragged, despised, and lonely, the famous courtier held on his way, made a fool gladly for the sake of his Beloved.

After Rome he went first to Germany, where Rudolph of Hapsburg received him warmly; then he turned to Eastern Europe, Tartary, and Arabia, as far as the borders of India, Greece, Palestine, Egypt, Morocco, from whence some say that he set sail for England. What a journey! One's breath is taken away by the thought of the bare material difficulties, but like that other amazing Franciscan missionary, Blessed Oderic of Pordenone, Lull was undaunted by either distance or hardship. He travelled partly by sea, during which time he devoted himself to the sailors and sought by every means in his power to make their lives less hard, above all to give them something of his own enthusiasm. After much thought he invented a rudimentary compass for them, and also an astrolabe by which they could tell the hours of the night, for Lull's mind had a strain of practical ingenuity which enjoyed technical and mechanical problems. His expedition to England,

if it ever took place, met with little success, and Edward I was too much occupied with difficulties at home to think long about his visitor's crusading projects. Had Lull but known it, the last Crusader had died in Saint Louis.

In 1283 he was back at Perpignan and Montpellier, where he wrote the *Sin of Adam*, the *Conquest of the Holy Sepulchre*, the *Ars Demonstrativa*, and his great novel, *Blanquerna*, *Master of Christian Perfection*, where his genius and his love found such wonderful expression.

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Lull was then at the height of his literary and intellectual power. He was a man of fifty with a tremendous amount and variety of experience behind him, and in *Blanquerna* he tells the story of his own life, and sets forth his ideas for the Church, society, and the whole human race. It is a magnificent book, full of human figures, presented with the greatest skill. The jester and the cellarer are just as much alive as the Pope and the scholar, and it is written with a sense of reality and sincerity which recalls the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. It is divided into five parts in honour of the Five Wounds of Christ, and in it Lull considers the Christian ideal in five states of life—the Married and Family life, the Religious life, the Priesthood, the state of Apostolic Government, and the Contemplative life. In the first we see Blanquerna in his home with his parents, then as a student, a priest, bishop, and finally as Pope; all Lull's hopes and aspirations, all his ideals of Church government are in these pages. His own experience and his passionate desire for a better system of education, his missionary enthusiasm and his spiritual ardour, find an outlet in *Blanquerna*, and when the old Pope

turns at last from his career of fruitful service to the contemplative life, it is Lull's own longing which speaks. The last section of the book, "The Lover and the Beloved and the Art of Contemplation," shows us indeed what Lull's inner life was, which he summarised in the words, "He who loves not, lives not."

In *Blanquerna* Lull is much nearer to us than in his *Ars*, and the whole work is permeated by the Franciscan spirit. Lull loves the "poor of Jesus Christ" as truly as ever Saint Francis did. He too extols Poverty as a bride and renunciation of possessions as a privilege, although it is poverty of spirit which throughout is placed above any merely material sacrifice. Much of *Blanquerna* is intensely individual, but in it we breathe the air common to all the great mystics.

The predominant influence in this side of his work is that of the Neoplatonists and the Fathers, especially Dionysius the Areopagite and Saint Augustine. From considering creation in all its manifold aspects, Lull rises to contemplating the Creator, first in all His faculties and attributes, then to the ultimate transcendence of the Divinity so eloquently expressed by Plotinus. To Ramon, as to Plotinus, the living contact between God and the soul is the beginning and end of the soul's life; a contact unfathomable by the intelligence, surpassing all reason, yet overwhelmingly perceived and felt by the soul as the only object of its desire. All creation participates in the attributes of God, in the Divine Existence, though not in the Divine Essence, for only in God essence and existence are one, incorruptible, immobile, and eternal. For Lull, as for Dionysius, all creation is the work and outcome of Love, and God is reflected in every one of the creatures which owe Him their existence. All through his convert life Lull is acutely



conscious of this, conscious of the wonder of his own being and destiny as a child of God, which enabled him by grace to enter at once into immediate relationship with Him, whom he conceives above all else as the very Essence of Love. "The lover stretched out and prolonged his thoughts in the greatness and duration of his Beloved, and found in Him neither beginning, middle, nor end, for Love is the beginning, end, and All, and the Lover and his Beloved become one." This is the note of all the great mystics. Dionysius expressed it in his answer to his disciples when they asked why Timotheus surpassed them all in holiness: "Timotheus is receptive of God, and thus thy ignorance is not a defect but thy highest perfection, thy inactivity, thy highest work, so in this work thou must bring all thy works to naught and all thy powers into silence if thou wilt in truth experience this birth within thyself."

Ramon Lull, with all his art and science, knew the truth of this spiritual noughting; in it he recognised the divine light of poverty, "the first beatitude"; by it he too, more than by any other faculty, no matter how divinely guided, became "receptive of God."

Lull's psychology, like that of his predecessors, was based upon the three faculties of the soul—Will, Understanding, and Memory; but whereas Saint Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle, places the greatest emphasis upon Understanding, with Lull the Will is the dominant power, both in God and in man. To him will and love are interchangeable terms; in the Will is the source of all life, of the creative activity of God, and of that power by which man can direct all his strength and talents to the one glorious end—to know, to serve, and to love God. In this Lull is very near Saint Augustine, Saint Anselm, and Hugh of Saint Victor; this



conception was in harmony with all the early Franciscan teaching, and particularly with that of Duns Scotus, who sustained it brilliantly against the intellectual theory of Saint Thomas.

In *The Lover and the Beloved* Lull speaks, however, not the language of philosophic definition, but that of the poet, and it is a masterpiece of spiritual song. "What meanest thou by love?" said the Beloved. And the Lover answered: "It is to bear on one's heart the sacred marks and the sweet words of the Beloved. It is to long for Him with desires and with tears. It is boldness. It is fervour. It is fear. It is the desire for the Beloved above all things. It is that which causes the lover to grow faint when he hears the Beloved's praises. It is that in which I die daily and in which is all my will."

The Lover wept and sang of his Beloved, and said: "Swifter is love in the Lover's heart than is the brilliance of the lightning to the eye or the thunder to the ear. The tears of love gather more swiftly than the waves of the sea; and sighing is more proper to love than is whiteness to snow." They asked the Lover: "Wherein is the glory of thy Beloved?" He answered; "He is Glory itself." They asked him: "Wherein lies His power?" He answered: "He is Power itself." "And wherein lies His wisdom?" "He is Wisdom itself." "And wherefore is He to be loved?" "Because He is Love itself."

"The keys of the gates of love are gilded with cares and desires, sighs and tears; the word which binds them is woven of conscience, devotion, contrition, and atonement; the door is kept by justice and mercy.

Said the Lover to his Beloved: "Thou art all and through all and in all and with all. I would give Thee all of myself that I may have all of Thee and Thou all of me." The Beloved answered: "Thou

canst not have Me wholly unless thou art wholly Mine." And the Lover said: "Let me be wholly Thine and be Thou wholly mine." The Beloved answered: "If I am wholly thine, what part in me will thy son have, thy brother, thy sister, and thy father?" The Lover replied: "Thou, O my Beloved, art so good and whole that Thou canst abound and yet be wholly of each of us who gives himself wholly to Thee."

Lull could well say: "The heart of the Lover soared to the heights of the Beloved's abode, so that he might not lose his love for Him in the deep places of this world. And when he reached his Beloved he contemplated Him with joy and delight. But the Beloved led him down again to this world to make trial of him with tribulations and adversities. They asked the Lover: "Wherein is all thy wealth?" He answered: "In the poverty which I bear for my Beloved." "And where dost thou rest?" "In the afflictions of Love." "Who is thy physician?" "The trust I have in my Beloved." "And who is thy master?" "The signs which in all creatures I see of my Beloved."

Then the Lover asked his Beloved: "Which is greater—loving or Love itself?" The Beloved answered: "In this mortal life, Love is the tree, the fruit of which is loving; the flowers and the leaves are trials and griefs. And in God love and loving are one and the same thing without either griefs or trials."

Thus through all the pages of this beautiful little book does the fool of love sing, and sing as only the lover can, who has counted all the cost and given it willingly for love.

Lull was, however, not only a singer but a teacher of love. He was never content with abstractions;

indeed for him nothing was abstract, and it is in this that he so closely resembles Saint Francis. For him spiritual truth was a concrete reality, and his practical mind at once set about finding how best to teach his own conviction to others.

*The Art of Contemplation* is the logical sequence to *The Lover and the Beloved*, designed to show his readers, step by step, the art of spiritual contemplation, not by any vague generalisations but by a strictly practical method. He is as definite as Saint Teresa. He deals first with the necessary external conditions, warns against "repletion or overmuch grieving," bustle or noise, excess of heat or cold, and recommends the night hours of solitude and starlight. Blanquerna, he says, excelled in contemplation only because he followed a method and rule, and he urges others never to be content with reading about the contemplative life but to practise it, "for in contemplation the soul soars higher in remembrance, understanding, and love of the Divine Essence than in reading the matter of its contemplation."

*The Art of Contemplation* consists in short meditations at once simple and sublime, written with admirable conciseness. It may be said that all mystics say the same things. So they do, and that is their strength, for there is perforce a fundamental sameness among them no matter what their century or country may happen to be. At the same time each age has its own particular formulas, its own individuality, and Lull the mystic was very clearly the descendant of the Neoplatonists, the contemporary of Blessed Angela, Jacopone, and Ruysbroeck, just as he is also the ancestor of Saint John of the Cross and the other great Spanish mystics. Like Blessed Angela he writes wonderfully eloquent pages upon the Divine Goodness and Greatness and Power, upon the

Eternity of God in which is no movement or change. His Wisdom and Knowledge and Will which are all contained in the one word Love Divine. "Thy Virtue is more real than that of any love beside and Thy Truth is more real than any Truth beside. For if the virtue of the sun be real in giving light and the virtue of fire in giving warmth, far more real is Thy Virtue in loving. For between the sun and its splendour there is a difference and between fire and its heat. But between Thy Love and Virtue and Truth there is no essential difference and all that Thy Love disposes in Truth, It does with infinite Virtue in love and truth, whereas all that is done by things beside is done with virtue finite in quantity and time. Wherefore since this is so, to Thee, Oh Love, Oh Virtue, Oh Truth, I bind and submit myself all the days of my life." There follow meditations on the Trinity, the Incarnation, on the Lord's Prayer, Ave Maria, the Commandments and Sacraments, on "Faith my friend," and the other virtues and their opposing sins. The old Pope Blanquerna has come to the end of his life, he has grown simple from much experience, and he will end his teaching and his days on earth with the beautiful prayer: "Humble indeed am I if I humble myself to Thee, Lord am I, if I am Thine alone. Victory have I above mine enemies, if I can only suffer for Thee. Wheresoever I may be with all that I am, I give myself to Thee alone and Thine alone I am, a guilty sinner. Of Thee alone I beg forgiveness, in Thee I trust, and for Thee I incur perils. Whatsoever may become of me, let it be all to one end, to wit Thy praise, honour, and glory. Thee alone do I fear, from Thee alone is my strength, for Thee I weep, for Thee I burn with love and none other Lord will I have, but Thee only."

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After the completion of *Blanquerna* Lull stayed on at Montpellier for a time, but 1285 saw him again in Rome, and he was able to found a new college resembling Miramare. There he wrote the *Hundred Names of God* and the *Book of the Tartar and the Christian* before he started for France. Thanks to the influence of the cardinal legate he was invited to lecture upon his *Art* at the Sorbonne, and he found himself face to face with the doctrine of Averroës, which in spite of official condemnation still had many followers. Lull opposed the Averroist movement with all his intellectual strength, and he was soon popular among the doctors and students who nicknamed him "Barbe Fleurie." His own former friend and compatriot Isabelle d'Aragon was Queen of France, and she easily persuaded Philippe le Bel to establish a missionary college for the study of Hebrew and Arabic. In the meanwhile Lull was at work upon another book, *Felix, or the Marvels of the World*, which ranks second only to *Blanquerna*. *Felix* teaches, indeed, "that it is not bookes, but only the great booke of the world and the all-overspreading grace of Heaven that makes men truly judicial." Lull had learned out of this "great booke," and as the Lover he could say: "They asked the Lover, 'What is the world?' He answered, 'It is a book for such as can read in which is revealed my Beloved.' They asked him, 'Is thy Beloved then in the world?' He answered: 'Yes, even as a writer is in his book.' 'And wherein consists this book?' He answered, 'In my Beloved, since my Beloved contains it all, and therefore is the world in my Beloved rather than my Beloved in the world.'"

Prominent in *Felix* is Lull's power of close and steady observation. He writes always of all natural things as of dear familiar friends, and in his many travels he had reasoned and questioned about every-



thing he saw. He advances theories upon the tides, winds, magnetic currents, the roundness of the earth, and the existence of another continent. He argues about chemistry, and completely refutes the accusation of alchemy and astrology, both of which he turns into ridicule. The story that he was invited to England by Edward I and made head of the Mint, in the hopes that he knew the secret of the philosophers' stone, was probably a later invention when enemies were trying to discredit Lull's memory, and even using his name to shield their own writings. These assertions, which were taken up by Eliphas Lévi, fit in badly with Lull's own declarations and his general character. He never advocated alchemy, and the famous saying, "Plus vales argentum in borsa quam in mercurio," is first found in his *Proverbs*. *Felix* knows nothing of the occult sciences, though it deals with many scientific questions in a long succession of allegories, stories, and fables, loosely thrown together, but often individually most fascinating. The eighth part is the famous "Book of the Beasts," which is partly political satire, but, above all, a delightful invention. It opens: "In a fair plain, watered by a cooling stream, there was a great company of wild beasts who desired to elect a King," and a great discussion there was until the lion was chosen rather than the elephant, ox, bear, or horse. The crafty fox this time is Dame Renard, but after many adventures she finally comes to the bad end she deserves, though the rabbit and peacock who brought about her downfall are cast out of the king's council. No one is left out, the cat who is royal chamberlain, or the dog, the porter of the palace; and surely many a fourteenth-century child must have delighted in the tales of the *Book of the Beasts*.

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In 1287 Lull went again to Montpellier, where he lectured and attended a chapter of the Friars Minor; then on to Rome, where he hoped great things for his missionary undertakings from the Franciscan Pope Nicholas IV. The Pope indeed was a missionary enthusiast after Lull's own heart, but beset as he was with political difficulties he could do little more than sanction the forming of new colleges and the sending out of individual missionaries. Before returning to Montpellier Lull made friends with the Franciscan minister-general Ramon Gaufredi, who requested the Franciscan convents in Rome, Apulia, and Sicily to give him facilities for lecturing to the friars on his *Ars*. Back in Montpellier he was soon teaching in the university and writing hard at the *Tree of Philosophy of Love*, and the *Book of Saint Mary*. 1290 saw him again in Rome, attracted doubtless by the crusading ardour of Nicholas IV; but too late the Pope realised the wisdom of Lull's suggestions to unite into one the military religious orders, and the Crusade failed dismally with the fall of Acre.

About 1287 Lull went to Genoa, intending to embark for Africa, but when the boat was ready his health broke down, as indeed it well might, after the strain Brother Ass had borne so long and patiently. He was attacked by fever, and suffered greatly both morally and physically, and he who had never hesitated was seized with panic. It seemed to him impossible to face the possibility of martyrdom: he turned back and did not start. He was too humble to hide all the "afflictions of Love, for the Lover grieved and cried out on his Beloved because He caused Love to torment him so grievously. And the Beloved made reply by increasing his trials and perils, thoughts, and tears." In weariness and grief Lull entered upon the dark night of his career. He

was tormented by scruples, and at one moment it seemed to him that unless he joined the Dominican Order he would be damned. He understood that the cloud in his soul was but an illusion, and he turned more than ever to the Franciscans before starting for Tunis, where he stayed some time preaching and baptising with considerable success. Perhaps for this very reason the tide turned against him; he was imprisoned, and after narrowly escaping death, returned to Naples. There he spent a year writing his *Tabula Generales* and the *Book of the Five Wise Men* which ended with a stirring missionary petition to the new Pope, Celestine V.

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Unlike Jacopone, we never hear of Lull actively engaged in the discussions between the different parties of the Franciscan Order. Probably he was too much absorbed in his own work; but undoubtedly the election of the saintly hermit Pier Morrone to the Papacy filled him with hopes for the future, and his petition may well have found an echo in the Pope's own mind. It came to nothing, as did the reign of Celestine V, and in five months the *gran rifiuto* was made, and the Pope had resumed his hermit's dress. Lull, like Jacopone, was profoundly disappointed, and for the first time a bitter note sounds in the Prologue to the *Tree of Science*, which he was then writing. He saw all too plainly how lightly the Christian claims were cast aside, not only by unbelievers, but chiefly by those who professed to follow them. To him but one thing mattered, the preaching of the Gospel, and he well knew that that would never be the first thought of the powerful Cardinal Gaetani, now elected Pope as Boniface VIII.

He addressed a new work, *The Articles of Faith*,

to the Pope; but if he had obtained little hearing from former pontiffs, Boniface VIII merely set him down as a madman. Neither can Lull's nationality have been a help, for the court of Aragon had opposed the recent election, and Gaetani was not a character which readily forgave. How should these two men, indeed, have understood one another? The one all ambition and statecraft, ruling with an iron hand through a most difficult time, and the author of *Blanquerna*, whose government was that of wisdom and love. The Pope would certainly have had no patience with *Blanquerna* if he had ever opened it, and Lull was curtly dismissed with a snub.

He was deeply dejected and cried: "How long shall it be till the darkness of the world is past and the mad rush of men towards Hell may cease? When comes the hour in which water that flows downwards shall change its nature and mount upwards? When shall the innocent be more in number than the guilty? Ah! when shall the Lover with joy lay down his life for the Beloved? And when shall the Beloved see the Lover grow faint for love of Him?" He felt all his own helplessness, his loneliness, the hopelessness of convincing others of what seemed to him clear as the sunlight. His feelings found a vent in the great poems of the *Cant di Ramon* and the *Desconort* (*Desolation*), one of his finest works in verse, just as bitter, as disillusioned and eloquent as the corresponding *Laudi* of Jacopone. "I am an old man, poor and despised, no one helps me and I have undertaken too great a work. This heart is a house of Love, my eyes fountains of tears. I will die in the battle of Love." "See," he cries, "if I have been negligent in treating of the public good of just men and sinners. I have left my wife, my children, all I possessed. I have passed thirty years in working

and suffering. . . . If you knew all I have said to many kings and princes, and how much I have worked, you could not think I have been idle, and if you are a pitiful man you would have pity upon me. . . . Because of the greatness of the undertaking I ask for companions, but of what avail to ask, for I am alone and abandoned.”

It is the cry of that deep human disappointment, of the man who has felt himself called to a supernatural work and sees it apparently fail. Pitiful was exactly what Boniface was not, and Lull saw that he would get neither sympathy or even justice from the authorities in Rome.

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He must now have been well known among the Franciscans, to whom he had been growing steadily nearer. They had approved his *Ars* when the Dominicans rejected it, and in 1295, probably at Assisi, where he certainly went, Lull became a professed Franciscan Tertiary. The Franciscan Third Order was then the greatest lay Order of the Church, its rule had been revised and approved by Nicholas IV in 1289, and it was shining with the light of some of its greatest saints. Lull was in deep sympathy with its ideals, and for many years indeed had followed them. In him we may find the truly Franciscan characteristic of a contemplative immersed in active service, and the active apostle whose whole life is rooted in contemplation.

Shortly after his visit to Assisi he went again to Rome, where he produced another great work, the *Tree of Science*, and a *Book of Proverbs*, but seeing that he could obtain nothing from Boniface, he started homewards to his beloved Mallorca, for Lull knew well the *maladie du clocher*. In Montpellier he met his

old friend and master, James II of Mallorca, who himself had gone through many trials and endless political vicissitudes.

How much these two must have had to say to each other, quite outside public affairs! They must surely have spoken of their joint foundation Miramare, which, alas, Lull had found empty. The original thirteen friars had long since started on their missions, and owing, perhaps, to Lull's own long absences or, as he seems to imply, to the malice of an enemy, their places had never been filled. Lull's ambition now stretched far beyond any single college, but he would gladly have seen Miramare reopened. Then, how dear to them both must have been James's son, whose vocation was so like to Lull's own. Ramon was now the courtier of another King, but his love for King James and all his family never wavered, nor did his interest in all that concerned them ever wane. He was always their friend and surely often their adviser.

Lull was by now well known in France where the Franciscan Order was already illustrious. In 1295 the child who was afterwards to be the great Tertiary Saint Roch was born in Montpellier, and Saint Yves, the lawyer and parish priest, was famous in Brittany. In 1297 Lull was in Paris, where he threw himself into the university discussions, attacking the Averroist doctrines as strongly as ever. As usual he was busy writing, for this indefatigable lover is known to have produced no fewer than four hundred and eighty-six treatises on every imaginable philosophic and scientific subject. His long life of self-sacrifice consisted in the unceasing service and tribute of his magnificent mind, soul, and bodily strength, all spent for his Beloved. He sought rest sometimes away from the town; leaving the Sorbonne behind he would go out into the country, and there beside the streams



and in the forests he found some peace of mind. Perhaps it was during those days of quiet that he wrote the *Tree of Love*, and though the height of his literary power had passed, it is still a lovely little work, a song of love, the work of the troubadour kneeling before his Beloved, and the art is finished and exquisite as that of the greatest Provençal singers. In his *Ars* and science Lull is beyond the reach of many of us, and our habits of thought are different from his, but as the lover, the mystic, and the poet, he is living and near to us as though no changing centuries had come between.

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In 1299 he was again in Mallorca, where he preached constantly to the people, often in the open squares, and by special permission spoke also in the synagogues and mosques in public debate with the Jewish and Moslem doctors. He wrote unceasingly; book followed book, the most interesting for us being the *Book of Prayer*. It is one of Lull's most lyrical productions and lifts the veil of his inner intensely spiritual life.

He gradually recovered from his depression; his peace of mind returned, he could say: "The Lover was like to die of joy and he lived by grief. And his joys and torments were mingled and united and became one and the same thing in the Lover's will. And for this cause the Lover seemed to be living and dying at one and the same time." Soon the wanderlust was on him again, and when he heard of a Christian success in Palestine all his old enthusiasm awoke and he started for the East. He was met by a new disappointment when he found how short-lived the success proved to be, and again he fell seriously ill. He turned aside to Cyprus to rest,



then with incredible energy he was soon off again—Armenia, Rhodes, Malta, Genoa, Montpellier.

On the way, perhaps as an amusement, he wrote the fine *Book of the Thousand Proverbs*, full of worldly and spiritual wisdom, and practical good sense. After his return home more books flowed from his pen with a speed that is surely without parallel. They maintain a wonderfully high intellectual standard; and indeed his physical and mental activity is almost unbelievable when one thinks of his age, his life, and the material conditions of travel in the thirteenth century. While in Montpellier he was able to see the new French Pope, Clement V, from whom evidently Lull expected great things. The idea of a Crusade came up again, and Lull at this time seems to have been in favour of a military expedition backed by the intellectual campaign he had so long advocated.

With all the vigour of a young man he also threw himself into the dispute raging round the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, and in his lecture-hall at Montpellier he was eloquent in its defence. Some critics credit him with a book on the subject. Anyhow, when he heard that the Sorbonne was ringing with the same theme he seems to have started off for Paris. There he had the comfort of finding a congenial spirit, really “l’âme qu’il falloit à la sienne,” in the young Duns Scotus, one of the greatest of Franciscan doctors. Duns Scotus was born in 1274, and throughout a sad childhood seemed completely dull and unintelligent. He ascribed the sudden awakening of his intellectual faculties to a special grace of Our Lady and resolved to consecrate all his life to her. His love of poverty equalled his immense learning, and in 1300 the young friar was lecturing to the thirty thousand students of Oxford. His

fame quickly spread south, and five years later he was summoned to Paris. The Franciscans at that moment were hotly sustaining the cause of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin against the Dominicans who opposed it. Pope Clement V ordered that an open debate upon the subject should be held in Paris, and Duns Scotus was the chief Franciscan orator. The controversy was long and the reasoning close on both sides. Public interest and hot partisanship were aroused in a way that only happens rarely, but which are all the more passionate when the issue is a religious one. It was largely the eloquence and learning of Duns Scotus which won the day for the Franciscans, and the University rewarded him with the title of "Doctor Subtilis." He was now a European celebrity, and his class-room at the Sorbonne was filled with the finest spirits of the day. One morning he saw in a row of the audience an old man, poorly dressed, with a long white beard, who followed his lecture with signs of approval. Thinking him to be some half-witted simpleton who had wandered into the Sorbonne by mistake, half ironically Duns Scotus put him the question, "Dominus quae Pars?" and the old man immediately answered, "Dominus non est pars sed totum." They were friends from that moment, and the Doctor Subtilis read with admiration the works of the Doctor Illuminatus. Duns Scotus wanted Lull to stay and lecture in Paris, and the Carthusians invited him to live with them. It was useless. The longing for the distant mission field was in Lull's heart; he was home-sick for hardship, and started for Africa.

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After preaching for a little time he barely escaped death at the hands of some angry Moors and was

thrown into prison. In nowise daunted he there began a new work, *The Disputation of Ramon the Christian and Hamar the Saracen*, which gives his opinions on the missionary problems of his day. Thanks to friendly influence he was released, but warned to leave the country never to return, and seeing that further effort was useless he took ship for Italy.

To add to his adventures the boat was wrecked and the indomitable Lull was one of the few survivors. He arrived in Pisa and set about arousing the crusading enthusiasm of the Pisans and Genoese, beside naturally writing several books, transacting endless business, and seeing countless people. What an amazing old man! In the hopes of urging the missionary Crusade on the Pope, he set out for Avignon, where Clement V had established his residence, pausing in Montpellier to complete several new works. As to the Crusade, it was destined to come to nothing, in spite of a general enthusiasm. For a moment it seemed to promise success; help for the Christian army might now confidently be expected from the Tartars, many of whom had been converted to Christianity, and the Franciscans numbered among their Tertiaries a "Frater Joannes quondam Rex et Imperator Tartararum." The Armenian Prince Hayton also urged on the Pope and the King of France the advantage of a Crusade, but in vain. The difficulties were too great.

Back in Paris, Lull continued his famous lectures; but Duns Scotus was dead and, Ramon, old and surely exhausted, may well have longed for rest. He wrote two works dedicated to Philippe le Bel, hoping he might still take the Cross, but the days of Saint Louis were gone, and all that Lull obtained from his grandson was a complimentary parchment exhorting

all his subjects to treat with *faveur bienveillante* him whom the king delighted to honour.

What did parchments and smooth words matter to Ramon Lull, who was only thinking of the evangelisation of the world, the cause of his Beloved? He set all his hopes on the Council of Vienne, summoned for October 1311, and to which he sent another earnest petition for the reforms and Crusade so near his heart. *The Dispute of a Clerk and of the Dreamer Ramon* shows that he knew only too well how little chance of acceptance his proposals had, though the council did approve the foundation of some more colleges, notably at Bologna, Oxford, and Salamanca.

Some of the results of the council were thus a satisfaction to Ramon, and as soon as it was over he returned to Montpellier. It must have been a sad visit, for James II was dead, and he set his face towards Mallorca. He was still writing hard, but the mission fever was hot upon him and visions of Africa rose before him. He spent, however, a year in Sicily, where he produced an astonishing number of books, but the beginning of 1313 saw him back for the last time at home. There he disposed of his little remaining property, his books and manuscripts to his children and various convents, for he knew that his journeyings were nearly ended. There was but one more to make, and for that he set out from Palma in April 1313.

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He might well say that "Long and perilous are the paths by which the Lover seeks his Beloved. They are peopled by cares, sighs, and tears. They are lit up by Love." It needed heroic love and courage and endurance to travel the paths by which Lull had come to his life's end, and for him indeed the world

had been "the prison-house of those that love and serve the Beloved."

He journeyed safely to Bugia, and at first all went well. He was able to preach for several months and to seek out many of his former converts. He went on to Tunis and was well received, but when he returned to Bugia things changed. Perhaps at first he had been more cautious than usual, or local fanaticism had died down. Now it was remembered that he was the famous Ramon who had been forbidden to return if he valued his life. That Ramon had never done when he was serving his Beloved, and now he knew no fear. He only prayed to Our Lady: "When the hour of death comes to me, show me and hold out to me those arms which held my Beloved and I shall not fear any of the ills which my enemies can inflict on me."

Did he feel that now the moment for which he had longed was come? If so we may be sure that his heart was full only of joy and thankfulness. "He was recognised and given over to torments by the enemies of his Beloved." His early prayer was answered, that he might die in the "crimson garment of the Beloved," for he was condemned on the spot, and when the mob had stoned him they left him lying on the ground, apparently dead.

The Christians quickly heard of his martyrdom and two Genoese merchants, Stefano Colombo and Luigi Pastorga, hastily obtained permission to take away his body. As they searched for him in the dusk they were surprised suddenly to see a column of light rising up to the sky, and at its base lay Ramon Lull. He still breathed, and at dawn they carried him on to a boat and set sail, hoping to bring him alive to Palma. He lived a short time, and tradition says that the dying martyr confided to the ancestor



of Christopher Columbus his conviction of the other land beyond the sea. As the coast of Mallorca came into sight Ramon Lull's "battle of love" peacefully finished. The Doctor Illuminatus was received at Palma as a hero and conqueror. He came home at last in triumph, he, the courtier, poet, missionary, and lover, and found his rest in the church of Saint Francis. Over his tomb the servitors of love might well inscribe his own chosen epitaph: "Here lies a Lover who has died for his Beloved and for Love."

He was immediately venerated as a saint in Mallorca, an office in his honour was approved in 1506, and he was finally beatified by Pope Pius IX.

"Deus qui pro mundi hujus tenebris illustrandis Beato Raymundum martyrem Tuum doctrina mirabili tuae sapientiae illustrasti: praesta ecclesiae Tuae, ut ejus illustrator doctrinis propulsis erroribus et tenebris vitiorum per viam virtutem incedat et ad Te memorandum, intelligendum et amandum convalescat; et pro nobis sit intelligentiae, sapientiae, scientiae atque eloquentiae perpetuus intercessor. Per Dominum," etc.

*Roman Breviary.*



CHAPTER VI  
SAINT BRIDGET OF SWEDEN  
1302-1373

- Sainte Brigitte de Suède, sa vie, ses  
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Paris, 1910.
- Birgittenischer Calender* . . . P. Simon Hormann, 1676.  
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Upsala, 1876.

## SAINT BRIDGET OF SWEDEN

It is a far cry from Mallorca to Sweden, and in many ways Saint Bridget is very different from the southern saints of her time. As a child, the only southern influence about her was indeed the language of the Church, the legends of the saints. Above all she loved the northern martyrs, and the stories which told of the fights and triumphs of those who had established Christianity in Sweden. Not so very long ago either, for only in the eleventh century did a Swedish king not revert to paganism! This northern prophetess came of a long line of Swedish warriors, and at first sight she is not what we are accustomed to think of as a Franciscan character. She was untouched by the atmosphere of the early Franciscan surroundings, by the poetic charm of the legends which sprang up round the first followers of the Seraphic Father. She knew nothing of Umbria, of the First Companions, or of Saint Francis the knight, singing the praise of Lady Poverty his bride. She received the Franciscan message in the sterner northern atmosphere, where the brothers went to preach and convert under very different conditions from those which met the missionaries in France or Spain. Sweden, moreover, knew no great Franciscan school such as prevailed in England. Northern Bridget was, and northern she remained, and in her often terrible prophecies we seem to hear the echoes not only of the Old Testament, but also of the *Edda*. The last twenty-five years of her life were passed in Italy, yet even the southern

landscape left her apparently unmoved. She speaks often of the beauties of nature, but it is never the vineyards and olives, or the pinetas and mountains of Italy that she recalls, but always the lakes and forests of the North.

All that was best in Swedish life came naturally to Bridget. Her father, Birger Persson, was related to the royal house of Folkung, and as "lagman" or governor of Upland enjoyed the privilege of royalty. Birger was a fine man, a great lover of justice, and he revised the legal code of Upland, even introducing a clause forbidding all traffic in slaves, for he said: "Man is free since Christ was sold for him." He married for his second wife Ingeborg Magnusson, cousin to the King of Sweden, and peace and prosperity stretched before them. They lived in the castle of Finsta near Upsala, and there on 14 June, 1302, their fifth child, Bridget, was born. The child was eagerly expected, for a venerable nun had prophesied that one of Ingeborg's daughters would be praised by all the world. A few months before her birth, Birger and his wife, returning from a pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Bridget of Ireland, had narrowly escaped drowning. Ingeborg saw an angel upholding her because of her unborn child, and he disappeared with the words: "See to it that thy daughter is brought up in the fear of God." This was indeed the chief idea of both parents, and Bridget with her brothers and sisters had the usual Christian education of children of Swedish nobles. They lived a patriarchal life; all the servants and vassals joined in the castle chapel for Mass in the morning, and in the great hall, while the women spun and embroidered, the legends and tales of Christian heroes were read aloud.

Bridget from babyhood was particularly responsive

to religious influence, and she was undoubtedly endowed with peculiar visionary powers. Before she was ten she is said to have heard the Voice of God calling her, to which she answered: "Here I am, since it is Thou who callest." On another occasion she saw Our Lady come to her holding a crown, which she set upon the child's head. Ingeborg knew the inner life of her daughter, and seeing how spiritually precocious she was, took her to hear the Lenten sermons on the Passion, given probably by a Franciscan or Dominican. Both the Orders of friars had arrived in Sweden during the thirteenth century, and quickly spread over the northern kingdom, and the Franciscans brought with them that note of tender dwelling upon the sufferings of Christ which was so characteristic of their founder. These sermons on the Passion made a deep impression upon Bridget, and she could not sleep one night for thinking of them. Of a sudden she saw a great cross of light before her, in the midst of which was Christ. "This is how I was treated," He said. "Oh, my sweet Lord, who has done Thee such harm?" asked Bridget. "Those who forget and despise My love." That answer and vision sank deep into Bridget's heart, and all her subsequent career was but the continuation and elaboration of her early experience. There is in her no conversion to be recorded, no violent reaction or awakening of spiritual talents, only their steady growth and expansion through successive phases of life.

Very soon after this vision came her first personal sorrow in the death of her mother, and Birger sent his two young daughters to live with their aunt. Legend tells of the rod which broke in her aunt's hands before reaching Bridget's shoulders when she was being scolded for excessive, new-fangled

devotions. It also relates how, in sight of all, Our Lady came and helped her with her embroidery, and at one time she suffered from an overwhelming vision of the powers of evil which pursued her. Still Bridget's inner life was her own secret, for when she made her appearance in society she was generally remarked only as a beautiful, intelligent girl. Her father proposed to marry her to the young knight Ulf, also of the Folkung race, and, virtuous, brave, and rich, he seemed indeed an ideal husband. Bridget, who secretly dreamed of the cloister, acknowledged later that she would sooner have died, and had she protested, Birger, who was a kind, Christian man, would doubtless have respected her wishes. She thought it her duty to submit, and so, with all the feasting and rejoicing of a Swedish noble's wedding, she became the wife of Ulf. She was small but lovely, and as she stood amongst the guests with her golden hair loose and the bridal crown on her head she may well have looked like the fairy-tale princess. Young though she was, Bridget was completely mistress of herself as she entered her husband's castle of Ulfåsa. There she received a royal welcome from his retainers, and together she and Ulf presided at the tournament and banquet which ended the marriage festivities.

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The bridal pair was morally well matched. Both had the same spiritual values, and for two years they lived as brother and sister, praying constantly that they might be guided by the spirit of wisdom in their way of life; it was only when they felt that they had indeed been called to the marriage state that they fulfilled their mutual vows simply and gladly. Ulf



had been educated by the Benedictines, and had a deep strain of asceticism in his nature; he rejoiced in Bridget's spiritual gifts and together they learnt the full meaning of the Christian life. Those first years were both happy and useful, for Ulf as the landlord of enormous estates had a thousand calls upon him, and Bridget knew what it meant to be the successful mistress of a big house. Together they spent themselves to help and serve others, and the castle was famed for its liberal hospitality to both rich and poor. They possessed all the good things of earth. Then suddenly one day Ulf was called away to war, and in the anxiety of his absence Bridget's visionary powers reasserted themselves, and she turned more than ever to spiritual consolation.

Ulf came home victorious, and Bridget was among the few to condemn a policy of hatred and retaliation. She was the first to beg for justice and mercy to their former enemies. The joy of husband and wife was complete when a daughter was born, followed by two sons, and Ulf planned a new and more splendid castle for his growing family. They searched for everything most costly and beautiful and precious, enjoying every detail, eagerly planning and arranging the new house. Then one day, as Bridget was looking at the newly-furnished rooms, she suddenly felt intolerably unhappy. An interior voice said to her: "On the Cross My Head knew no rest, but thou searchest for ease and comfort." It was a sharp lesson to Bridget, and the spirit of penance stirred within her. She and Ulf both joined the Third Order, to which some of Bridget's relations already belonged, and their lives were ordered much like that of Saint Eleazar and Blessed Delphine de Sabran, all for others, as little as possible for themselves.

Bridget was anxious to learn more, and she turned

to the Dominicans, Cistercians, and Bernardines, who all had convents near Ulfåsa. Her confessor was Master Mathias, a celebrated canon of the Cathedral of Linköeping, and he helped her to study the literature of Christianity. Above all, he helped her in the far harder task of learning the way of poverty. For Bridget did not naturally love poverty. She had probably never heard of Jacopone and the *Laudi*, and was far from grasping the spiritual romance of the Franciscan vocation. That came to her later. She was an independent, proud nature, not at all democratic, self-confident, and full of life; but the canon was wise, and saw that he had but to gently direct her splendid enthusiasm, and that grace would do the rest. He realised her great powers, which as yet were but partially awakened, but which surely marked her out for some special work. He was content to wait; and seeing that happiness was no danger to her, left her to safely enjoy all the blessings which had been showered upon her so liberally. He knew she was ready to leave them should there come the call to do so.

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The death of Birger in 1325 greatly increased the riches of Bridget and Ulf, and two years later Ulf was elected "lagman" of Nericia and member of the royal council. Like Bridget, Ulf was a willing student of history, and his one idea was to administer his province according to the highest Christian standards. Bridget was full of interest in everything that concerned his political life, and had also the education of her eight children to superintend. It was with regret, therefore, that in 1334 she had to accept the post of mistress of the robes to the young French queen, bride of King Magnus I. Bridget

had spent nineteen happy years at Ulfåsa, and now, when she inclined to greater austerity, she found herself plunged into the life of the court, as friend and adviser of a young king and queen whose ideas were quite contrary to her own. Beneath the robes of state she wore a hair shirt, and the routine of her duties at court did not interrupt her penances or devotion. Soon she was generally known to possess extraordinary powers and gifts, though as far as possible she hid them from sight. She served the queen loyally for four years; but neither she nor Ulf had any love for the court, and the death of one of their children made an opportunity to beg for leave. They decided to go on a long pilgrimage, and in 1341 set out south accompanied by a number of relations and friends. Their route took them by Cologne, Aix-la-Chapelle, Tarascon, Sainte Beaume, and Saint James of Compostela. Humbly dressed, they journeyed as real pilgrims with no idea but the sanctuaries they were to visit. Bridget was wrapt and absorbed in a new spiritual joy, and all her former life seemed forgotten in the intensity of her devotion. As they were travelling homeward Ulf fell seriously ill at Arras. Bridget was in an agony of anxiety and appealed to Our Lady and Saint Denis to restore him to health. Both appeared to her, promising that Ulf would recover. They told her too that she had yet many pilgrimages to make and a great work to accomplish.

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Ulf was indeed able to return to Sweden and see all his children again; but he had come home with a new intention in his heart and mind. He had vowed that, should his life be spared, he would spend his remaining years in a monastery, and he was now faced

with the separation from his position, possessions, and above all, from the wife he loved. It was one of those questions which can only be decided by the individual conscience. Ulf heard the call and followed it. He put all the affairs of the province in order, handed over his charge, and made all the necessary arrangements for his children. Then he made the last sacrifice and, leaving Bridget, entered the Cistercian monastery of Alvastra, where he died three years later.

For twenty-eight years Bridget had lived happily and fully and usefully. She and her husband had shown the world what a Christian marriage could be, how Franciscans could live at court, and the spirit of poverty go hand in hand with possession. That phase of her life was closed, and under the shadow of the Cross, in the agony of separation another was about to begin. Her children were all married and settled in life; Bridget was free to choose her path. Ulf's decision naturally supposed a like intention in his wife, and the Bernardine nuns would have received her gladly, but for some time she knew the further trial of indecision. The will of God was not clear; she felt no inclination either to the Poor Clares or Bernardines, though she took refuge as a guest in the convent of Alvastra. All that remained in Bridget's nature of earthly love and pride had passed through the fire, and she now waited simply to see the way open before her. In her newly acquired freedom from earthly cares, her gift of contemplation, already remarkable, increased steadily, and she entered, unconsciously perhaps, upon the great ecstatic period of her career.

She was told in a vision that the highest spiritual favour of the Mystical Marriage was to be hers, that "Third Stage of Ardent Love" which lifts a soul to

the limit of spiritual experience possible on earth. Day by day her powers seemed to develop; she threw herself headlong into the most searching and relentless penances, which were controlled, however, by two wise confessors in the name of obedience. She made one last, very human sacrifice in giving up the wedding-ring that Ulf had set on her finger, for henceforth their union had no need of outward symbol. Bridget lived now in an almost perpetual visionary state, seeing the secrets of Paradise, Purgatory, and Hell unveiled before her. Her visions were for the most part intellectual, but quite different from those of Blessed Angela of Foligno. Bridget was more prophetic than philosophic, intensely vivid and pictorial rather than impersonal and transcendent. She deals with questions that Blessed Angela never touches, and her visions are often those of the seer.

Many of her revelations are directly concerned with her own time, with the people and events she was specially called upon to influence, and for that reason she often seems farther removed from us than does her Franciscan sister. Only, however, in her prophetic visions; never when she tells of her personal communion with Christ, which was constant. He assured her: "I love thy love with an infinite love, and if it were possible, I would be crucified anew rather than lose it." She saw the glory of Heaven, and found herself supernaturally fed, and clothed in the garments which one day would be hers. She was able to understand the unlimited love of God for man, and the corresponding horror of evil. She felt the pity of Our Lady which could save sinners from any evil and heal them of every ill. She saw the angels and celestial spirits in beautiful shining bodies, and the spirits of evil in all their distortion and corruption. She had intercourse with Lucifer,



and in a vivid passage she describes how, at the time of his fall, he lost all power of memory. From that moment he had no consciousness of good, only of evil. He could no longer see justice and truth clearly, but was like a prisoner, who in a deep dungeon may remember a letter read long ago in liberty, and which now he is incapable of reopening.

She contemplates the immense dignity of all creation, and especially of man, the child of God, endowed with free will. From that liberty results the awful destiny of the soul who chooses to turn from the light. She sees it come to judgment, and hears it condemned, not by Christ who pleads with it, not by God its Creator, but by its own choice and conscious refusal of the Love of God. "Christ asks but for one thing from man, humility and penitence." "I never judge without mercy; I am merciful even to the damned; man is My brother by the humanity I assumed, and as a Brother I judge." "His own conscience dictates his sentence. I only say to him: 'I bore thy suffering; I expiated the sin which thou couldst never expiate; I prepared thy ways and showed thee My love, and thou hast fled from Me. Thou dost indeed deserve My justice, because thou hast refused My mercy, yet, if it were possible, I would die again for thee, sooner than condemn thee.'"

Bridget saw too the condition of many particular souls in Purgatory. She speaks of their closeness to those living on earth, of their enduring love. She was able to help them, and she had the deep joy of seeing the soul of Ulf reach its final complete beatitude. In all these visions she cared nothing for herself, receiving every grace only as a channel whereby it could be transmitted to others. She would willingly have hidden herself from the world and enjoyed in solitude the intercourse with Christ



which was so immeasurably precious, but to her dismay she heard the interior voice telling her that she must return to the court, not indeed as in former years, but to teach, to prophesy, to reprove. In vain she protested that she herself had everything to learn, that she was utterly unworthy to teach others. The Spirit within her only answered: "Go, and I will speak through thee."

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To be fair, it must be said that Magnus I, the queen, and the court received Bridget very well. She had been a general favourite in years gone by, and many of her relations held high offices of state. It says, however, a great deal for her tact, as well as her courage and sincerity, that she was able to fight successfully against the network of intrigues which surrounded the king and obtain from him many most necessary reforms. To Bridget fell the ungrateful task of being a prophet in her own country, and she was unsparing in her denunciation of the corruption both in public affairs and in individual lives. She read the secrets of many hearts; the events and consequences that she foretold came to pass; she was a power in the land. Moved partly by affection and respect, partly by fear, Magnus began by following her advice, though he was too unstable and weak to keep up any lasting improvement. Bridget seemed inspired in all she said; she reproved unsparingly the bishops, clergy, and religious orders, and urged to penitence all and sundry who were revealed to her as unworthy of their office. She was the prophetess of fiery words and terrible judgments, and few probably guessed what her mission cost her. It must surely have been the most trying time of her life, and only obedience to a

divine call could have carried her through it. Her mission to and for Sweden, however, was not to be only in preaching and exhorting. One day as she was in ecstasy she saw Our Lord and His Mother come to her and tell her to be strong, for she it was who had to plant a new spiritual vine in her country. The older religious orders were not sufficient for the needs of the times, and, still in ecstasy, she received the constitutions for this new Order of Saint Saviour. The words of the rule, as indeed of nearly all her revelations, were taken down as they fell from her lips by the Cistercian, Peter Olafsson, and Master Mathias, both careful men who tried her in every way to test the spiritual quality of her visions. At these moments her body was insensible to earthly things, her mind unconscious of everything but the vision which held her whole being enthralled, while the monk and priest waited pen in hand to record what she said.

The Order of Saint Saviour was to include both men and women, rather on the lines of the abbey of Fontévrault. Each convent was to consist of sixty nuns ruled by an abbess, and thirteen priests ruled by a prior, in memory of the Blessed Virgin and the seventy-two disciples of Christ. Echoes of Bridget's Franciscan vocation were to be found in the clauses dealing with poverty. She wished not only for individual but collective poverty, for she now held that "property is to damnation what the spark is to the fire." No dowry was to be demanded from any postulant, but voluntary gifts were accepted. The monks were to preach, the nuns chiefly to pray; but the spiritual life of the Order was to be balanced between contemplation and activity. It was an institution for apostolic work, not like the older orders to be devoted chiefly to study and the con-

templative life. Thus the Order of Saint Saviour was the first new rule to be formulated by a member of the Third Order. Bridget's own part in her foundation, however, was purely mystical; she remained all her life a Franciscan Tertiary without ever taking any other vows.

The king and queen, both vacillating, vain characters, were impressed by, and afraid of their powerful cousin. They realised that this, the first religious order to be established in Sweden by a Swede, might be a national glory as well as a spiritual advantage to themselves, and they gave Bridget the property of Vadstena and a large sum of money towards building the new convent. The first stone was laid in 1346, but it was only to be finished many years later, after Bridget's death.

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Hardly had the rule of Saint Saviour been written than Bridget received a new inner command to intervene in the quarrel between the kings of France and England, and to write to Pope Clement VI, who, following the example of his predecessors, had established his seat at Avignon instead of Rome.

Bridget's prophetic mission had heightened her natural interest in politics, and she believed firmly in the part that religion must play in political life. By sympathy and training she was the partisan of France against Edward III, and the Battle of Crécy threw her and all the Swedish court into mourning, but before everything she desired a just and lasting peace. Above all she longed for the true supremacy of the Holy See, and she, the Franciscan Tertiary of the north, was unconsciously preparing the way for the Dominican Tertiary of Siena in her mission to induce the Pope to return to Rome.

Clement VI received Bridget's two messengers, the Prior Peter of Alvastra and Bishop Hemming of Abo, most cordially. He was on good terms with King Magnus and all the Swedish hierarchy, and he had heard of her sanctity and supernatural gifts. He read the letter with respect, and promised to use his influence to the utmost in the cause of European peace. He even seemed inclined to listen to her prayer for the transference of the papal throne, but other influences were too strong, and he did not move.

Meanwhile at home Bridget had parted with her last possessions to her children and the poor, and it was during those months that she had the famous vision of the judge and the monk which forms the subject of the great *Book of Questions*. In it the creature stands before its Creator and asks the why and wherefore of many problems which confuse and agitate our poor troubled humanity, and receives the answers. What is the conclusion of it all? That love and faith alone can bridge the gulf which in this life is fixed between man and perfect understanding; that the mind alone is helpless; but what human reason cannot grasp, the human will and heart can fathom, in acceptance and love.

It was a difficult moment for Bridget; everything seemed to turn against her, and she was not spared the fire of persecution. She had exposed so many scandals, and her influence was so great, that her enemies were but watching for an opportunity to be rid of her. Even the king and queen were tired of her, and accusations of witchcraft, taunts, and insults met her at every turn. She could not approve the king's war against Russia, and saw how disastrous its results would be. Her prophecies and warnings passed unheeded, and she retired to Alvastra to offer herself as a victim for her country.

In 1349 the papal bull inviting all the faithful to Rome for the Jubilee was read in the Swedish churches, and Bridget's thoughts turned to the south. She was discouraged in her efforts to convert the Swedes to penitence; war and plague were devastating the land; her own life was full of complications and troubles. Three of her children were in religious orders, but at least two of the others were far from leading Christian lives, and only her daughter Catharine really understood her mother. Bridget hesitated to leave, thinking that her duty lay at home, but she was commanded in a vision to set out for Italy, and with a heavy heart she obeyed.

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The pilgrims journeyed by way of Genoa and Milan and arrived in Rome before the opening of the holy door by the cardinal legate. The Pope's brother, Cardinal Hugues de Beaufort, offered them a lodging in his palace, and Bridget knew the northerner's excitement of being for the first time in Rome. She came from a country whose past was bound up with the heroes of Norse legend and mythology, where Christianity had no long history. In Rome she saw at every turn the relics of a thousand years of Christian experience; she trod the ground of the martyrs, prayed at their tombs, and followed in the footsteps of the Apostles. She could understand the Rome of early Christianity, indeed, far better than that in which she was actually living. Bridget, after all, was a northern feudal lady, and in Sweden justice was largely in the king's hands, and political life was to a great extent simple and ruthless. She quickly saw that the state of Rome was deplorable. The Holy Year improved the conditions of living for the moment, but feuds and factions rent the Eternal



City, while the Grande Compagnia of Fra Moreale harried the country roads and towns. Only a few years before Rienzi had risen, and triumphed, and fallen, and was even now lying in prison at Avignon. His career was to Bridget as incomprehensible as the attitude of the Roman nobility and the intrigues of the different political parties. Her northern mind could not understand the Latin mentality. In a vision she saw all the corruption and evil which surrounded her, and for which she saw but one remedy, the return of the Pope. That was the only hope of a firmer, wiser government. Kneeling at the tomb of Saint Peter she heard in her heart the assurance that she would see his successor come back to Rome.

For the moment Bridget's actual mission was chiefly among her own country-people, strangers like herself, and she was a friend to all. Peter Olafsson had been appointed confessor to the Scandinavian pilgrims, and Bridget's submission to him was complete. This independent, self-reliant woman consented to do nothing except under obedience. Her comings and goings, her devotions and occupations, were all regulated by him, and in this hard school of obedience she learnt humility. She was told to study Latin, and instead of visiting the shrines she loved, she patiently stayed at home with a grammar. She was soon joined by her daughter Catharine, whose husband died while she was away, and the young widow's only thought was to follow in the steps of her mother.

In a short time they found themselves well known, not only amongst the foreigners but with the Romans. Bridget had cured Count Latino Orsini of a dangerous fever; she was a friend of the Orsini and Papuzeri families, and the force of her personality drew people



to her irresistibly. Of those who approached her almost all loved her. The rumour of her powers, however, seemed alarming to those who did not know her. At one moment it looked as though the turbulent Roman mob in one of its many frenzies would turn against the Scandinavians, and Bridget was openly threatened as a witch. She had longed for the quiet of Alvastra in Sweden, and instead she found herself embroiled in all the turmoils of Rome.

August 1354 heard the bells ringing *a stormo* for the return and short triumph of Rienzi; by the end of the autumn they were pealing for his fall and death. Confusion was everywhere, and still the Pope tarried in faraway Avignon. Bridget was beset on every side; consulted by all as a prophet, a healer, a seer, and, far from the contemplative life, her activity was unceasing. She was peace-maker and adviser in many a quarrel, and a counsellor in endless difficulties. Clement VI was dead, and had been succeeded by another French Pope, Innocent VI. He perhaps would have made the move, but his age on one hand, and the influence of the French court and cardinals kept him in France. Bridget's letters were intercepted before they ever reached the Pope's hands, for Avignon did not like messages from Rome, which threatened to take the Pope back to Italy. Bridget never faltered. Repeatedly in visions she received messages for the Pope which she faithfully transmitted; above all, she never ceased to pray that indeed the evil of the papal absence might end. She had revelations too concerning the kings of France and England and her cousin Magnus. In a vision she saw her beloved Sweden torn by civil wars, devastated by the black death, and Magnus in danger of soul and body. She sent him letters and messages, urging him to come to Rome as a pilgrim,

and to change his manner of life and government, but her efforts were unavailing, and in 1364 the house of Folkung fell; Magnus II was deposed, and the Mecklenburg prince, Albert I, elected in his place.

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Bridget had been fourteen years in Rome, and her growing influence radiated far and wide. She was famous for her gifts of healing and prophecy, and wherever she went she was surrounded by a crowd of people begging for favours. They had seen her in Saint John Lateran lifted high over the heads of the congregation in ecstasy, or passing through the streets of Rome with her feet not touching the ground; for Bridget's later life is one long tale of extraordinary graces and phenomena. She never flagged in her devotion to the early martyrs, and constantly visited the catacombs, generally in a state of trance, light emanating from her body. She loved the basilica of San Paolo fuori le Mura, and there the crucifix spoke to her, as that of San Damiano had done to Saint Francis. She was often in the church of the Ara Coeli, and of San Francesco a Ripa in which was a room in which Saint Francis had stayed. There on 4 October, 1364, he appeared to her, inviting her to "Come and eat and drink with me in my cell."

Bridget had long wished to visit the other shrines of Italy, and she took this as a divine command and set out with Catharine and a number of friends for Assisi. They reached it just before the feast of the Perdono on 2 August, and made their way up to the church of San Francesco to pray at the tomb of the Seraphic Father. While there Bridget heard the Voice of Christ saying to her: "For penitence My friend Francis left all pleasure and his life was passed in meditating on My Words, My Works, My Love.

To-day his brethren give themselves up to the pleasures of the world; they no longer love the poverty which was the joy of their father." Bridget found plenty to sadden her at the Sacro Convento, where many of the brothers had indeed left the path of poverty, and she was unsparing in her denunciation of their betrayal of a sacred trust. She was no less vehement, however, in her condemnation of the extreme spiritual party, and defended the bull of Pope John XXII which had condemned their errors. She warned them in words very like those of Saint Francis that the priestly dignity and authority must at all costs be respected, and to those who wished to follow poverty to its utmost material limit, she answered that even Our Lord, having neither house nor money, yet owned the clothes that His Mother made for Him. She attacked the abuses on both sides with complete impartiality.

As Bridget entered the Porziuncula she fell into ecstasy, and all the human considerations of the Order vanished. "Here I granted for love that which love asked of me," said the inner Voice, thus confirming the tradition of the Indulgence which some had doubted. She turned again to Saint Francis to consult him for herself and the Order, and he appeared to her with the words: "The cell that I invited thee to enter was not my house in Assisi, but the mystical inner cell where I practised obedience. I found food in the souls of those whom I brought to follow Christ; my thirst was quenched when those whom I had converted loved God with all their strength, and won for Him other souls, and attached themselves to my friend Poverty. My daughter, enter this cell, share my bread and drink, and thou wilt be satisfied to all eternity."

Such was the message, the comfort, that Bridget

carried with her from Assisi, and it was in this Franciscan cell that she found peace.

The pilgrims went on to the other shrines of Italy—Saint Thomas at Ortona, Saint Michael at the Monte Saint Angelo on the Gargano, Saint Nicholas of Bari, Saint Bartholomew at Benevento, and finally they came to Naples, where they lodged in the house of Buondelmonte and his wife Giovanna Acciaiuoli.

The Queen of Naples, Giovanna I, was one of those turbulent natures forever torn between good and evil. Her first husband had died, and rumour accused her of complicity in his murder. She promptly married her cousin, Louis of Taranto, and after his death yet a third time, Jaime II of Aragon and Majorca. Scandals were endless at the Neapolitan court. In Giovanna's troubled heart there burnt, however, a desire for better things, and she wished to see Bridget, of whom she had heard. For a time at least the prayers and exhortations of the Swedish saint seem to have had their effect, and she was listened to and loved by many of the Neapolitans. Among others there was the young Elzéar de Sabran, nephew of Saint Elzéar and Blessed Delphine, who had died but four years earlier in 1360, after a beautiful life of love and abnegation.

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The Swedes stayed a year in Naples, and arrived back in Rome in 1367, in time to see the realisation of their hopes and prayers in the entry of Pope Urban V into the Eternal City. He had received Bridget's petitions imploring for his return, and he listened willingly enough to her revelations and entreaties for the reform of the clergy, the religious orders, and the laity. Indeed Urban was as intently

set upon reforms as Bridget herself, and she saw with joy his first steps towards the repression of simony and other abuses. It seemed as though a new era were about to begin. The Roman barons, many of whom had left the city, returned, among them Bridget's friend, Latino Orsini, and she could assure him that this French pontiff was a worthy follower of the great Orsini, Pope Nicholas III. In 1368 came the longed-for meeting between the Pope and the Emperor Charles IV. To him Bridget wrote commending the four Daughters of Heaven, Humility, Abstinence, Abnegation, and Charity, who had been dispossessed of their rightful places by Pride, Pleasure, Luxury, and Simony. Charles came to Rome full of friendly intentions towards the Papacy, confirmed all the privileges of the Church, and an alliance was made to protect the Holy See from its most powerful Italian enemy, Bernabò Visconti of Milan. The Queen of Naples and the King of Cyprus also came to greet the Pope, and visions of a new Crusade rose before Bridget's indomitable spirit.

It seemed to her too that the moment had at last come to beg the Pope's approval of the rule of Saint Saviour for Sweden, but she could only obtain a partial approbation, and he referred her to a general council. A large Swedish pilgrimage arrived in Rome, and Bridget's two sons, Birger and Charles, were among the number. Together with their mother they went south to Saint Andrew at Amalfi and other shrines, and came back to Rome, only to hear that Urban's determination had weakened and he was preparing to leave. It was a bitter blow to Bridget, and in vain she warned and begged him to remain. He consented to see her at Montefiascone, where he had halted, and there he gave her another somewhat grudging approval of the rule for the



Order of Saint Saviour. Nothing, however, could turn Urban back to Rome, and on 19 December, 1350, he died in Avignon, to be succeeded by yet another Frenchman, the Cardinal de Beaufort, under the name of Gregory XI.

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Bridget continued her letters to the new Pope, sending as her messenger Latino Orsini. Gregory, after reading the first, was inclined to listen to her words, but he was persuaded that she was an impostor. He therefore ordered the nuncio in Rome with the Comte de Nôle to go and see her, and if possible to surprise her in some error. No one, however, who knew Bridget, ever accused her of dishonesty, and a further revelation was sent to Gregory by the Comte de Nôle. It was even more peremptory than the last, and in it Our Lady, speaking to Bridget, had said that she would warn Gregory no more; he would answer for his hesitation later, and his sin was also that of France, for trying unjustly to keep him at Avignon. Before his election Gregory had made a vow that should he be made Pope he would bring his court back to Rome. He had no need in reality of being convinced of the right thing to do; but he was weak and shifting, unable to make a stand, and fell back upon a fatal policy of procrastination.

When Bridget wrote to him that he owed his election, not to his own merits but to the prayers of the faithful, he knew it to be true. It was only the evil suggestions and influence around him, together with his own inclination, which kept him from carrying out his vow. Bridget the foreigner had no hesitation in writing to the Pope in words of authority, telling him of all the misery which would follow if he refused to obey his conscience; and while Gregory hesitated in



Avignon, Bridget in Rome waited and prayed. At last she saw a vision of a great plain bounded by Saint Peter's, the Vatican, the castle of Saint Angelo, and the hospital of Santo Spirito, and heard a voice say that there the Pope "will be free and at peace to govern the Church." Her active part in the work, however, was nearly over; she had prepared the way for Saint Catherine of Siena, who was just entering the greatest phase of her political career, and to her it remained to finish the work that Saint Bridget had begun.

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Always Bridget had longed to see the Holy Land, and now she knew that it was indeed the will of God that she should do so. This last pilgrimage was to be the crown of her life, and she was yet to learn in the holy places her last lessons in the life of Our Lord. Twenty years earlier the Blessed Virgin had told her that in Bethlehem she would show her the mystery of the Nativity, and that promise was now to be fulfilled. The moment that Bridget had so ardently wished for in her youth and middle age had come, but now she was worn out and ill, and it required all her energy and will power to start on the long journey to Palestine. When her sons Charles and Birger heard of her intention they joined her, and the party set out from Rome in 1371, Bridget being sixty-nine years old. The first halting-place was Naples, where Bridget had many friends. She asked for an audience with the queen, doubtless hoping to strengthen her in the good resolutions she had made at their former meeting. But to try to hold Giovanna was like trying to fasten running water, and the only result of the interview was that Charles, completely forgetting his wife in Sweden,

fell violently in love with the queen. Giovanna's husband was far away, though probably still alive; but no consideration availed; the two were blind and heedless to everything but their mutual passion. In vain Bridget protested, but where words were useless, her prayers were answered. Charles was already ill, and a short time before his marriage with the queen he died in his mother's arms, repentant and absolved. He, "the beloved of all," was buried in Naples, and the pilgrims sadly set sail. After terrible storms they reached Famagusta, and finally Jaffa. As they were entering the harbour the ship struck a rock, and though no one was drowned, Bridget and her companions lost all they possessed, and entered the Holy Land in a state of real Franciscan poverty. They lodged first in the Franciscan convent of Rama, where Bridget received the consolation of a vision of the soul of Charles saved by her tears and prayers.

It was 13 May, 1372, when they came into Jerusalem, and there began for Bridget four months of almost perpetual vision. The Passion passed before her in all its inner and outer details of the suffering of Christ. She sees the scourging and hears a voice from the crowd call: "Would you kill Him like that, that His death may be the cause of yours?" She stands in the crowd hearing all that is said, and is beside Our Lady as Her Son, almost unrecognisable, comes past. She sees Our Lord stripped of everything, so that a spectator gives a bit of linen to make a loin-cloth. She even notes a knot in the wood of the cross between the shoulders, and then she enters the still darker mystery of the inner suffering of Christ and His Mother united in the Divine Will. "Thy Son is dead," one of the Jews finally cries to the Blessed Virgin. "But he will rise again," answers

one of the crowd, and some have interpreted these words in the vision as representing the faith of future times. The Blessed Virgin turns to Bridget: "That is what my Son endured for thee"; and again she hears the divine words: "I have loved thee with an infinite love, and sooner than be deprived of thy soul I would suffer all My Passion and die again for thee alone." She follows Him to the sepulchre and keeps watch there; and when finally she came out of her ecstasy, it was at the place of the Scourging that she told her vision to the Bishop Alfonso, and in the Franciscan convent attached to the basilica that she wrote the account that Peter of Alvastra translated into Latin. Bridget on another occasion hears the Saviour mourning for the souls who will not accept Him throughout the ages; she sees Him marvellously consoled by all who turn to Him, and her one idea is to tell all of what she sees, give to all some of her own faith and love. She recalled the Franciscans with whom she was staying to the fervour of their first vocation. Poverty must be the only possession of the Friars Minor. Many, alas! following the "enemy brother<sup>1</sup>" were set upon things of this world, and had forgotten the example of Saint Francis, who gave up all for God.

Bridget's vision continued after she left Jerusalem; she was now far beyond the reach of earthly politics, and entered again into the peace and joy of visionary contemplation. She sees the martyrdom of Saint Stephen, with Saul standing by. In the house of Saint Joachim and Saint Anna she sees the Blessed Virgin who says to her: "I am she who was conceived without stain of sin"; and this six hundred years before Lourdes. Then Our Lady explains to her how the devil was never able to distract her from

<sup>1</sup> Referring perhaps to Brother Elias?

God; such was the peace within her that sin could find no room to enter.

At Nazareth Bridget witnesses the mystery of the Annunciation. As the Blessed Virgin was wondering how she could thank God for such a grace, or how she would answer the questions of Joseph, another angel like to Gabriel appeared a second time, saying: "Our God Who is Eternal dwells in thee, therefore fear not. He will speak for thee and His Wisdom and Power will complete His Work." Bridget follows Our Lady and Saint Joseph step by step to Bethlehem, and there she stands during their hurried arrival, waiting for the moment when the cave is filled with light and singing angels, and Mary kneels before Jesus and takes Him into her arms, to still His crying, as she says: "Be welcome, my God, my Lord, my Son." Bridget sees the shepherds and wise men come and go, and follows each detail of the childhood of Our Lord. It is again Our Lady who takes her to the Jordan and shows her many of the scenes from the life of Christ. Finally she sees the Apostles gathered round the Blessed Virgin waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit; and then at last, after revealing to Bridget that she lived in all sixty-three years on earth, Our Lady tells her of her Death and Assumption. An angel had come to announce to her that her work on earth was done. But of the reunion with her Son, "Thou couldst not understand" is all she says; then a wonderful vision of the glorified Virgin explained to Bridget all that words were incapable of doing. During those months Bridget may indeed be said to have lived with Christ and His Mother, for her revelations are the record of one who has seen and lived, never of one who has meditated and thought. They are a wonderful mystical record and treasure given into

her hands, as she fully recognised, not for her own spiritual satisfaction alone, but for the healing of many. She was but the channel chosen, that many might be refreshed.<sup>1</sup> On 8 September it was revealed to her that the pilgrimage must end, and that the time had come for her to return to Rome.

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Bridget was utterly exhausted, her body worn out by the fire of the Spirit.

They embarked at Jaffa, and again paused at Famagusta where Bridget, indomitable to the end, warned the house of Lusignan, and the inhabitants, that their city was like to Gomorrha in its vice and corruption. The pilgrims journeyed on, to find Naples under the scourge of the plague, and on all sides the sufferers begged for her help. Again she told the queen of the fatal results of her sinful life; again she called the Neapolitans to penance; she healed many. The archbishop ordered sermons on her revelations to be preached, and the church was crowded with cardinals, priests, monks, nobles, workmen, ladies, servants, for public curiosity was aroused, and Bridget was renowned. The queen insisted that she should spend several months in the palace. Who knows what it meant to Bridget thus to accept the hospitality of the woman whom she might easily have looked on as the cause of her son's death; but Giovanna was a storm-tossed soul, and Bridget's one idea was to win such for God. With genuine enthusiasm the queen listened to Bridget's words, as she did to those of Saint Catherine of Siena, and this troubled child of the world could

<sup>1</sup> The so-called Brigittine Rosary is said to be derived from this revelation, but for a full discussion of the subject see the article by the Rev. R. P. Thurston, *The Month*, p. 458, August 1902.



truly say that at least she had been the friend of saints. She provided the Swedes with money for the journey, for they were reduced to great poverty, so much so that when they were back in Rome during Bridget's last illness, she accepted alms from a passing Swedish tailor till money from home had arrived.

They returned to find that even now Gregory was still hesitating in Avignon, and Bridget wrote him another letter imploring him not to let the precious days pass. "Oh, my son Gregory," the inner voice dictates to her, "throw thyself into My Arms, obey the counsel of thy Father and thy Creator. Submit thyself and I will receive thee with fatherly kindness. Enter bravely into the right way, and thou shalt be happy." But the time had not yet come when Saint Bridget and Saint Catherine should triumph, and the Pope be brought back to Rome.

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Bridget had come to her last battle—against herself. All her life she had accused herself of pride, and now, old and worn out, she learnt how helpless she was. Her spiritual consolations were withdrawn; her intellect rebelled at accepting truths it could not fathom; she longed for homage and the praise of men; her body demanded comfort and enjoyment, all the things she had denied it for so many years. In this fight she learnt indeed the last secret of poverty and that "humility which is a ladder rising from earth to the heart of God." When the storm passed Bridget regained her joy, the joy of one who is over the reefs at the entrance to the harbour. She wrote one more letter to the Pope, but like the others it remained unanswered. She thought of the rule for her Order, and received the mystical assurance that



she would indeed be considered its first abbess. She revised every detail of the constitutions. After that her thoughts turned away to her daughter; above all to her son, to whom her last instructions were addressed, and on 23 July, 1373, surrounded by her children, her Swedish confessor, and her friends, in the habit of the Third Order, this daughter of Saint Francis ended her earthly life.

She was buried temporarily in the church of Saint Lawrence, belonging to the Poor Clares. Catherine had, however, but two ideas, the canonisation of her mother, and to return with the precious body to Vadstena and there inaugurate the rule of Saint Saviour. She and Birger were soon able to start on the homeward journey, which was indeed a triumphal progress. Bridget's fame had spread throughout the northern countries, and everywhere as she passed the people crowded to do her honour. After a quarter of a century she came back to Sweden on 14 June, 1374, and was met by her old master and friend, Bishop Nicholas Hermansson, he who had also baptised Catherine forty years earlier. In the midst of her children and grandchildren, and an enormous crowd, Bridget was laid in the temporary wooden chapel of Vadstena. The monastery, like the Order, seemed to be awaiting the return of the foundress for its completion.

The rule indeed was Saint Bridget's, but it was her daughter, Saint Catherine, the first real Abbess of Vadstena, who actually established the Order. She went once again to Rome for the final approval of the rule by Gregory XI, and to promote the cause of her mother's canonisation. There Saint Catherine of Sweden met Saint Catherine of Siena, who was completing the mission of Saint Bridget in Italy. Catherine did not live to see the canonisation, for

she died at Vadstena in 1381, and Bridget was enrolled amongst the saints by Pope Boniface IX on 8 October, 1391.

The Order of Saint Saviour shone throughout the north until it was swept out of Sweden by the reformation under Gustav Vasa, and Saint Bridget and her daughter were forgotten by their own countrymen. In England it was one of the first institutions to suffer under Henry VIII, and only Syon Abbey in Devonshire survived. The continental houses continued to flourish, though much reduced in number, but now there seem to be signs that the children of the rule of Saint Saviour are again increasing. In all the Brigittine houses of the world incessant prayers are offered for the conversion of Sweden, and that she may again remember and honour the name of her greatest daughter.

“Domini Deus noster qui beatae Brigittae per Filium Tuum unigenitum secreta caelestia revelasti: ipsius pia intercessione da nobis famulis tuis in revelatione sempiternae gloriae tuae gaudere laetantis. Per eundem Dominum.”

*Roman Breviary.*

## CHAPTER VII

BLESSED IPPOLITO GALANTINI

1565-1620

- Vita del Venerabile Servo di Dio* . . . . Don Dionisio.
- Ippolito Galantini Fiorentino* . . . . Baldocchi Nigetti.  
Rome, 1721.
- Compendio della Vita del Ven. Servo di Dio Ippolito  
Galantini* . . . . Rome, 1757.
- Florentina Beatificationis et Canonizationis Ven.  
Servi Sei Hyppolitis Galantini Informatis.*

## BLESSED IPPOLITO GALANTINI

"GOD give you His Peace." Thus Celano says Saint Francis began his sermons, and it was the message of peace and penitence that he wished his disciples to carry far and wide among all people. Saint Francis preached as the birds sang, because he could not help doing so, and Celano has shown him to us, his face shining with happiness, his whole body speaking after true southern fashion, while he arrested the attention of his listeners with his vivid, dramatic phrases. Preaching has always been one of the chief occupations of the Franciscan Order, from the learned doctors such as Saint Anthony and Saint Bonaventure down to the many friars and laymen who in churches and market-places, in the fields and on the roads have faithfully carried out the mission of their founder.

In the thirteenth century there were indeed two distinct kinds of preaching. Special permission had to be obtained to discuss dogmatic subjects, and that was reserved relatively for the few, but many men without theological training were allowed publicly to exhort all who would listen, to penitence and amendment of life. It was this popular tradition which produced countless preachers and made possible the work of a child like Saint Rose of Viterbo. Sermons were by no means limited to the pulpit. So the passers-by in the streets of Florence in the year 1570 may have paused on the outskirts of a group, chiefly children, listening to a small boy of

five who, mounted on something to give him a few inches, was preaching to them with remarkable clearness. That child was Ippolito Galantini, son of the weaver Filippo Galantini and his wife Ginevra Zuffoli, who lived in the Via Palazzuolo.

Ippolito was born just a year after Galileo, at a moment when in every way Florence was becoming exceedingly prosperous and important. Ever since the days of Lorenzo il Magnifico the government had been one long tale of maladministration, but with Cosimo I a new era opened. The first Grand Duke may have been cruel and relentless, but he was extremely able. Under him and his successors Tuscany became a power in European politics and a modern state. The later Medici inherited all their ancestor's love of the arts. They founded museums, they encouraged education and science; the university of Pisa was re-established; the law courts were reformed; swamps were drained; roads were built. Florence was one of the capitals of modern Europe.

The Galantini were fairly well-to-do workers, and under the enlightened policy of Cosimo I trade had greatly improved, and the weaving of woollen and silken stuff was one of the most lucrative of Florentine industries. Ippolito thus came into the busy artisan world of Florence, a delicate little boy and a precocious one, gifted with sharp wits and a most tenacious memory. His five-year-old sermons, probably on what he had heard from others, were repeated with all the love of imitation of a child. Besides, children developed very early in those times, and all through the Renaissance we hear of them making Latin and Greek orations at an age when, to our ideas, they might have been playing with rocking-horses. The child prodigy has always existed, and there are numerous examples of the religious sense



awaking amazingly early. This was certainly the case with Ippolito. Spiritually he was as precocious as, for instance, Mozart was musically, when at four he was composing and playing a piano concerto.

Long before Ippolito could understand the meaning of the church services he was attracted by them, feeling somehow their immense significance to himself. In other ways he was obviously a perfectly normal boy, quite ready for a game, and we hear of him playing merrily enough along with other children. That he was tender-hearted is shown by his remorse when accidentally he hurt another boy, and the eighteenth-century *Vita* says that he was a universal favourite because of his kindness and gaiety. On another occasion, when he was about seven, he was the one to come off badly. He slipped on a slide he and some other boys had made, and his face was severely cut and bruised. Evidently Filippo was not a father to be treated lightly, and we can judge of his severity by the fact that Ippolito hardly dared go home, for fear of a beating. At last he managed to creep in unobserved, and his mother sent for a doctor who sewed up the cheek. Ippolito went to bed, knowing that his father next morning would see the wound, and that night he kept thinking of Saint Cosmo and Saint Damian who had cured so many ills by their medical skill. The little fellow appealed to them, and, says the *Vita*, they came and dressed his face so that no mark was visible outwardly, and Ippolito only felt that wound inside his mouth. Anyhow his father saw nothing; but this incident took such hold of the child's mind that he became convinced that he too in some special way was called to the service of God. Visions of the cloister rose before him, though he knew himself to be too young to obtain admission to any order; besides

he was tormented by doubts as to his vocation, by the claims of the world which pressed upon his opening understanding. The poor boy was worried and anxious until one day his mind was filled with the sound of those blessed words, "Fear not," and all his anxiety disappeared.

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Ippolito's great desire now was to learn, and he was one of the most intelligent pupils in the catechism class which the Jesuit Fathers had started at San Giovannino. There too his talent for teaching began to find some scope among the other children, for above all Ippolito was a born teacher. All his life he had to teach somebody, something, and he never hesitated what it should be. It says a lot for his personality that he was able to impose himself successfully on other boys of his own age, for we may be sure they would have been impatient enough of being lectured by one of themselves had he not possessed some special power. As it was, they were carried away by his enthusiasm, and Ippolito found the outlet he needed.

In 1574, when he was nine, he made his first Communion, very young according to the ideas of that time, but Ippolito was far older than his years, and everything in life came to him early. His spiritual fervour was immensely increased, and already he began the harsh penances, both great and small, which he never afterwards abandoned. Perhaps he already felt that only thus could he be master of himself, for Ippolito was no soft or easy nature. If he had been he would never have accomplished what he did. He was a strong-willed man, of a dominating intelligence, who knew every temptation, who was not shut away from the world, but in the midst of the

life of his fellows, and it was on that open field that from his childhood to his death he won the battle over himself.

Some three years after his first Communion the Archbishop of Florence, Cardinal Alessandro dei Medici, decreed that everywhere in the diocese children were to be thoroughly taught the catechism, and Don Jacopo Ansaldi was appointed to supervise the matter. His business was to appoint teachers for the different places, and to search among the laity for persons able to help in such a work. He knew Ippolito well, and realised that here was a boy to be made use of, and so, in spite of his own protestations, Ippolito found himself formally appointed master of Christian doctrine to the church of Santa Lucia sul Prato.

There he taught with great success, and men and women who perhaps came first out of curiosity were moved by his words. But still Ippolito secretly thought of a convent, and especially of the Capuchins, and he begged to be admitted to their Order. They would not accept him on the ground that he was far too delicate for so hard a life, though it was something more than their refusal which, the *Vita* says revealed to him where his real mission lay.

Once, as he was praying, he suddenly saw the room full of light, but fearing a snare of the devil, he only prayed the harder. Three times, however, the splendour was repeated, and with the last radiance Our Lord on the Cross appeared to him and told him to found a society which should teach to the poorest and the lowest and the most ignorant the laws of Divine Love. And then Christ held out to him an exceedingly thorny garment, which Ippolito tried to put on, while Our Lord said to him: "These thorns, Ippolito, are what your disciples will do to you, but

I shall be with you always, and will listen to your needs; be in peace, My son." And when the vision passed Ippolito saw that his body was covered with the marks of his thorny habit; but his heart and soul were full of joy.

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He was now leading a very difficult life. His father's unsympathetic character resented his son's spiritual enthusiasm and made things excessively hard. The boy was treated more like a slave than a son, and though by this time he was an expert weaver, doing his twenty-four braccia of cloth in the week, his father was never satisfied, and always required that his son should produce more. He kept him at the loom continuously; above all, his whole attitude was harsh, and at one time the boy, worn out by work, by unkindness, and by his self-inflicted penances, fell seriously ill. He was restored to health almost instantaneously after receiving Holy Communion, but this in no wise softened his father's heart. Indeed he was all the more irritated when Ippolito, then about seventeen, was made director of the Compagnia di Santa Lucia.

He was now in a position of some prestige and authority, and the parochial lay associations could be an important element in the life of a place like Florence. They were the bridge between the cloister and the world, touching both at many points, and their influence was all the greater just because they were in daily contact with their fellow-citizens. As Ippolito looked out upon the world around him he saw plenty of corruption, ignorance, and indifference, and he determined to fight them to the utmost of his power.

With that common sense so characteristic of the

saints, he proposed to do it by an active campaign of teaching—for, he said, “Who can follow a good they know not?”—and by personal example. This was all his programme, and he at once set out to live it. By sheer force of will, coupled with great gentleness of manner, he completely reorganised his *compagnia*. He insisted that the offices should be sung in plain-song according to the Capuchin tradition; he would have nothing hurried or perfunctory. His fervour was so great that it gained others. Such numbers of people were persuaded to confess their sins, that the priests of the Duomo, Santa Maria Novella and Ognissanti were all kept busy. Ippolito knew well enough, however, that to bring men to one act of penance was not sufficient; the difficulty was to make them persevere, and he and his followers used to seek out all the newly converted, make friends with them, and try to help them in every way. He could not tolerate a thing half done.

His fame was now steadily growing, and the Florentines, ever ready for a novelty, hastened to enrol themselves in the Compagnia di Santa Lucia, which soon had more than a hundred members. As to Saint Francis, so to Ippolito, the increase of members meant increase of difficulties. Petty jealousies and rivalries crept in, and some of his followers even dreamed of establishing an independent *compagnia*. Then his dearly-loved companion, who was to him more than a brother, died, and for some years Ippolito was tempted to despair. He held on through it all, and his work never suffered; rather it grew, and he was offered the post of guardian to the Compagnia di Ognissanti, which he accepted, leaving Santa Lucia in charge of some devout women of the parish as a centre for the teaching of girls.



The Church of Ognissanti had originally belonged to the fraternity of the Umiliati, but it afterwards passed into the hands of the Friars Minor of San Salvatore, and here Ippolito came into closer contact with the Franciscans. There seems no reasonable doubt that he was a professed Franciscan Tertiary, though the absolute written evidence of his profession seems lost. His friend, Padre Antonio Tognocchi, the chronicler of the Tuscan province, however affirms it, and it was confirmed in the Bull of Beatification of 1825. Surely too the evidence of his life and character is overwhelming.

Ippolito had only been a short time at Ognissanti when, in 1590, there came the terrible famine, one of those disasters which periodically threatened to overwhelm Florence. Cosimo I had made excellent trade laws; he had done his best to stimulate agriculture and to increase the production of the necessities of life, but all the admirable efforts of his successors were powerless before the appalling need. The supply had never been equal to the demand, and a bad season or two brought matters to a terrible pass. The famished poor flocked down from the hills, only to die outside the towns they were not allowed to enter. There were already too many mouths within the walls; each man thought of himself, and hunger killed every other consideration. Ippolito rose triumphantly to the occasion. He and the other members of the Compagnia organised regular help for the starving and homeless. They went round from house to house, finding out what each had to offer, begging a roof for one, money or clothing, or, most precious of all, food for another. One day, when he was in dire need, the *Vita* tells, Saint Ignatius appeared to him, telling him that all would be well; and sure enough a boy, dressed as a peasant, leading



a donkey, knocked at the door and left with him a barrel of wine, besides a quantity of bread and other food; but when Ippolito turned to thank him the peasant had vanished. None of the food, we may be sure, remained long in Casa Galantini, and many indeed were the people who, in those dark days, had cause to bless Ippolito and his followers.

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The Compagnia of Ognissanti, which at first seemed so well suited to Ippolito's work, proved to be only a temporary stage, and after a couple of years there jealousies arose which caused his removal to San Domenico in Palazzuolo, and finally to the Oratorio dei Bini, which was given to him at the wish of the Cardinal Archbishop.

Dissensions grew up around him everywhere like a crop of stinging nettles. His mission, so difficult anywhere, was particularly so in Florence. The Florentine mentality, so quick, versatile, and artistic, has always been terribly critical and jealous. How many a reputation has been unjustly blackened for years; how many good things have been nipped in the bud by biting wit, and an appropriate nickname! Ippolito's work, lying as it did among the laity, without the protection of a regular religious Order, was at the mercy of every wind of criticism and jealousy. He was slowly becoming a prophet in his own country, but he needed an unlimited supply of patience and courage. One of the Lenten preachers even attacked his work in public, though later on, when he found he was misinformed, he retracted. All this, combined with overwork, however, told on Ippolito's health, and he became very ill with some form of blood poisoning. Indeed his recovery may well have seemed a miracle.

The doctors ordered him to some baths near Pisa, and the change helped to restore him. Poor as he was, he could not buy the privacy he would have liked, but had to mix with all the other patients and with a good many people who seem to have gone there only for amusement. Someone who knew him asked him to speak, and in the end he found himself holding a popular mission in one of the largest churches of the place. Ippolito's preaching always attracted listeners; it was so living, so dramatic, and he had that unself-conscious rhetoric which is the gift of many Italians. The *Vita* tells numerous stories all through his life of the conversions among all classes which followed his words. He was never in a hurry with any one, and he knew how to wait patiently while the work of grace was accomplished. Sometimes he had, it is true, the encouragement of quick results, but it is on record that he prayed for fourteen years before one particular soul could be brought to give up an evil life.

Soon after his return from Pisa his father died, leaving the charge of supporting his mother and family largely on Ippolito's shoulders, and that in a time of scarcity and high prices. To make matters worse, there were debts to be paid; debts which are hard enough for any one, but cruelly so for an honest poor man. He tried to pay them off, but however hard he worked, the debts remained unpaid, until a chance acquaintance, Giuseppe Cambrini, hearing of his plight, discharged them all, leaving Ippolito free to turn to other things.

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There were now many people in Florence who wished to help Galantini in his work of spiritual education, and they rightly saw that the only chance

of lasting success was to build a chapel which should belong to a congregation of which he was the recognised head. His teaching had stirred many hearts, especially among the descendants of the Piagnoni. His insistence on penitence, on turning from the vanity of the world recalled indeed the words of Savonarola. Like the great Frate and other leaders of the spiritual life of Florence, Ippolito cared nothing for the learning of the Renaissance, and he was in full sympathy with the aims and ideals of the counter-reformation. He was the friend of Saint Maria Maddalena dei Pazzi who consulted him repeatedly, and we hear of his visits to her in the Carmelite convent. It seems unlikely that he ever knew Saint Philip Neri, that other great Florentine, in the flesh, but he may well have been in touch with Saint Catharine Ricci who only died in 1589. She and Saint Philip Neri were united by their common veneration for Savonarola. They corresponded at length; both ardently desired the reform of the Church; through them Savonarola's teaching was handed on; and they surely influenced Ippolito Galantini who grew up in the religious atmosphere they had fostered. The fiery denunciations of Savonarola were perhaps no longer necessary, and his followers of the second generation could afford to be more lenient to themselves and others than their grandfathers had been. Ippolito the Franciscan, had nothing Puritan about him, and in this, both he and Saint Philip, Pippo Buono as he had been called in Florence, were akin. Indeed, the congregation which was growing up under the Florentine weaver was carrying out much that Saint Philip wished to do in Rome.

Ippolito insisted above all that the chapel of the new Compagnia should be easily accessible to the

poor, and he therefore chose a site behind the church of Ognissanti giving on to Via Palazzuolo. Thus it arose literally under the shadow of the Franciscans, and by wish of Pope Clement VIII it received the name of the Congregation of Saint Francis for Christian Doctrine. Nothing surely could have been more appropriate. In the thirteenth century the great Franciscan doctors had held chairs in Paris and Oxford, and largely directed the intellectual life of Europe. Now another man, loyal to the Franciscan tradition, was proposing to teach too; but this time to teach the poorest and most ignorant that learning which is for all, and on which alone individual and social life can safely be built.

Ippolito, in grateful memory of his first *Compagnia di Santa Lucia*, always invoked Saint Lucy after Saint Francis as patroness of the congregation, but the poor people of Florence had yet another name for the new *Compagnia*. Half in jest, perhaps, they began by calling it the "*Compagnia of the Vanchettoni*," but that became a nickname of love, and do what Ippolito would, it was soon generally known by one name only, the "*Compagnia d'Ippolito*."

The poor knew him, indeed, to be one of themselves, and it gave him his power with them. He too knew all the difficulties of poverty, but he knew her not as a slave but a lover, and he wished the congregation of Saint Francis to possess no capital, and to depend only upon alms. With individual need he had the greatest sympathy, though he waged unceasing war against dirt. The clothes of this Franciscan were poor, and mended, and patched in all directions, but never dirty. "When you can show me," he would say, "one word in the Gospels by which Our Lord preached the virtue of dirt, than I will become the

filthiest of men, but till then I will be clean." He could indeed teach his boys many a valuable lesson.

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The new chapel was ready to be opened on the feast of Saint Francis, 4 October, 1603, when the congregation held its first meeting. The building was only completed, however, for the next Palm Sunday, and unluckily on that very day a serious accident happened. It had always been Ippolito's practice, since the days at Santa Lucia, after Vespers to go with his followers to a bit of ground outside the town where they could play pallone or some other game. He only stipulated that no money should be wagered, and that the loser should always pay his debt in prayers.

On this Palm Sunday they went out as usual, but they were more numerous than ever before. As they passed the fortress by the ramparts, the sentry, whether by accident or design, chose to think they were a mob bent on making a disturbance, and the officer in command ordered several rounds to be fired on them without warning. Happily, only one boy was hit, but naturally such a mistake produced an outcry. Probably to justify himself, the commandant of the forts sent in a report to the Grand Duke Ferdinand I complaining that such meetings were intolerable and endangered the public safety. Ippolito's defence was presented through Cardinal Alessandro dei Medici in Rome, who wrote in the strongest terms to the Grand Duke saying that there was but one Ippolito Galantini, and he, with his teaching, would do more to keep Florence safe than all the blundering forces of the State.

The Grand Duke was only too ready to listen. He was a wise and enlightened man, who as a cardinal before he succeeded to his brother's throne had



established the great missionary organisation of the Propaganda. It was he who opened the town of Leghorn as a refuge for people of any nation and creed, who had to fly from religious persecution, and he seconded Saint Philip Neri in obtaining the reconciliation of Henry IV to the Holy See. His interest in art and education was very great, and Ippolito's work was exactly such as appealed to him. He wished to be known as the special protector of the new Compagnia, and of Ippolito whom he called "that blessed robber who causes a dearth of criminals for my prisons." The robber had the friendship and support of his sovereign in all his unwearying battle against crime and ignorance.

The attitude of the Grand Duke was a blow to Ippolito's enemies, but they still tried repeatedly to ruin him by calumny, and even to cause the chapel to be shut down. The opposition never came from his ecclesiastical superiors, and the Cardinal Archbishop was loud in his defence. It was a campaign of petty rivalries and jealousies which seemed endless, and certainly, humanly speaking, must have made his life a burden, not for himself, but because he felt the good work was being hampered. The Archbishop cut the tittle-tattle short, and confirmed Ippolito in his charge. All the higher clergy indeed seem to have realised what a valuable assistant they had in this son of the people who could second the work of the parish priest as no one else was able to do.

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The Compagnia was now established; its debts were paid and Ippolito helped by the Archbishop was able to organise it as he wished. The rule to be observed was that of the Third Order, and beyond this the whole association presents to us all the aspects



of a well-run school and club. Ippolito could not admit that a man ever finishes with learning, and there were classes for every age from the youngest to the oldest.

The most generally used textbook was the Christian doctrine of Cardinal Bellarmine, and the teaching in the Compagnia was a complete course of Christian education. Every state of life was considered; boys learnt their duty as sons, fathers, and citizens, and the virtues advocated by Ippolito in dealing with other men open visions of a Christian society where charity, justice, and peace are indeed the ruling powers. It was an admirable spiritual training, full of wisdom and balance, and of an exceedingly high standard. Each one was taught, first of all, to consider the greatness of God, and from that all the other virtues and duties were deduced. Here is Ippolito's scheme for the building-up of character, and surely a better one can hardly be imagined. It considers the means whereby man can fulfil his duty to God, himself, and his neighbour under the following heads:

(a) Towards God:

- Fear of God.
- Burning love.
- Extreme awe.
- Constant zeal.
- The spirit of praise.
- Ready obedience.
- Love of all the Divine Graces.

(b) Towards himself:

- Shame for past sins.
- Contrition.
- Knowledge of self.
- Penitence.
- Anger against sin and its causes.

Vigilance and thoroughness in everything.  
Modesty and discretion.

(c) Towards his neighbour:

Mercy and compassion.

Kindly cheerfulness.

Patience.

Reverence and mutual respect.

Kindness.

Concord.

Generosity.

We can read all this and much more to-day written, it is thought, in Ippolito's own hand in an old manuscript book in the library of the Compagnia. It is brought out with great pride by the guardian, bound in red damask, with a silver relief of Saint Francis on one side and Saint Lucy on the other. Ippolito indeed had a heroic programme for his followers, and he knew the wisdom of making great demands upon them.

His own life was heroic inwardly and outwardly, and all the discipline that he preached was first practised on himself. The spiritual life of each member of the Compagnia was his first care, for he knew that on it all the outer work depended. At a time when it was by no means the custom he would always, if possible, receive Holy Communion every day, and his example naturally reacted on his followers. It was the centre of his inner life, and his devotion was encouraged by the Franciscan influence around him.

Saint Francis had indeed laid it upon his disciples as a duty to preach the love of God in the Blessed Sacrament, and much of his own teaching might have been held for a Eucharistic mission. In Franciscan art Saint Clare holding the monstrance has always stood beside Saint Francis holding the Cross.

The friars of the sixteenth century had been particularly zealous in regard to the Blessed Sacrament, and Ippolito must often have heard of that great Franciscan lay brother, Saint Pascal Baylon, who died in 1592, and was to become the patron of all Eucharistic associations. It was the Franciscans who brought into general practice the Exposition of the Forty Hours, which had originated in Milan in the sixteenth century under the Capuchin Father Giuseppe da Fermo. It was intended first of all as an act of reparation for the excesses going on in the streets during the last days of carnival, for the Renaissance carnival and Lent were very different matters to what they are now, when outwardly, at least, the world makes but little contrast between the two. The picture left us in almost any account of the Florentine carnival, or in the popular carnival songs, is indeed a highly-coloured one, and it is small wonder that men like Ippolito spent those days on their knees.

The Compagnia di San Francesco held the Forty Hours devotion with great solemnity for Pentecost, but the carnival was set aside especially for prayer and good works. On the last day before Lent, Ippolito would always gather together a number of the poorest people he could find, and there in the chapel a dinner was given them. They were the honoured guests, honoured because in their need they represented the Poverty of Our Lord, and the nobles of Florence held it as a privilege to help serve them.

Year by year for generations the Cena dei Vanchettoni continued, and many of us can remember it well. Outside, perhaps, was a cold February afternoon, but within all was cheerful. The tables were set in the way made familiar by so many Renaissance

pictures, and there was much fine old plate and majolica and table cloths with embroidered ends. There were huge loaves of bread and many flasks of wine, and the steaming dishes smelt exceedingly good, and there was no doubt as to the guests' enjoyment. Many people were there helping who bore the same names as those who had helped Ippolito, and he and Saint Francis looked down from the walls at the entertainment of their friends. Alas! that the high prices after the war and the reduced state of the Compagnia brought this old custom to an end.

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The members of the Compagnia di San Francesco, besides learning themselves and teaching others, were driven by Ippolito into every branch of social work. He sent them among the poor in their own homes, and into the hospitals. He organised a regular service of assistant nurses in the wards of Santa Maria Nuova. He took them into the prisons, and if he found there any one under sentence of death he stayed with them until the end. His work among the sick brought him into contact with Saint Camillo de Lellis who, moved by the same pity, had recently established his Congregation for the Infirm. Ippolito knew only too well the need of such an institution, and it was largely thanks to him that Saint Camillo de Lellis and his disciples were welcomed with open arms in Florence.

With every month the activity of the congregation seemed to increase, and everything radiated from Ippolito, or rather from that inner life which was the source of all his work. He saw his disciples, indeed all Christians, as soldiers whose sole enemy was evil. They were to fight it, each in their own homes and occupations; fight it unremittingly by penance and

good example and active works of charity. Always ready to learn himself, he never only inculcated a principle but showed how it could be lived, and that was the secret of his success as a teacher. He knew how to stimulate his followers to individual effort, and yet to give them that sense of solidarity which is so difficult to achieve in any lay organisation. No detail was too small for him, and, alongside of the lectures and teaching, he thought too of the boys' games and men's recreation. Once a year he insisted on a joint outing of the whole Compagnia, generally to Fiesole, where they were entertained by the friars of San Francesco. After a picnic in the convent wood and vespers in the church, there would generally be a *Sacra Rappresentazione*, acted by the members of the congregation. The *Sacra Rappresentazione* was the descendant of the old mystery play. It had an immense vogue during the Renaissance and still persists in the more remote parts of the Abruzzi and southern Italy. In a country where men are born actors the need to dramatise religious truths is imperative, even as Saint Francis had done at Greccio. Ippolito always aimed at sanctifying the whole of life, not in refusing it; and if his ragamuffins from the street, his workmen and students could learn by acting themselves, every facility for it was given them. Nothing about the Compagnia was sad or dreary or dull, and that because it was intensely Christian.

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The value of such an institution as Galantini's was soon recognised by intelligent men, though all his life he was tormented by the enmity and jealousy of the small people, both among the clergy and laity. Branches of the Compagnia had been established



in various places near Florence, but now he was invited to extend his work to Volterra, Pistoia, Lucca, and Perugia, all of which he visited. The Duke of Modena begged for his presence from Cosimo II, and a congregation was established there too on the lines of the Florentine one.

He had indeed become a celebrity, and endless stories were told of him. One day two young ruffians, either from spite or as a practical joke, lured him from his house on a pretended errand of mercy, and then as they crossed the Ponte Santa Trinità they flung him over into the Arno. They looked for him in vain in the middle of the stream, and to their amazement saw him calmly walking out of the water on to the shore. Ippolito never would speak of what had happened, and indeed passed it all off as a joke; but after his death a friend in whom he confided swore that he had told how in the water he had seen Our Lady and Saint Francis beside him, and that they had lifted him on to the bank.

Perhaps it was the memory of this incident which took him soon afterwards on a pilgrimage to Loreto, then to Foligno, and probably also to Assisi. We hear of him at Camaldoli and La Verna, where he spent long hours of solitary prayer in the grotto of the Sasso Spico used by Saint Francis. He went on to Siena, and after all these years of hard work, and the nervous strain inherent in work such as his, surely in those places he must have found the great peace and rest he needed.

About this time too his supernatural gifts seem to have become more pronounced. Psychically and spiritually he had always been exceedingly sensitive, tormented by the devil in many tangible ways, and also by years of the hardest spiritual temptation. His inner life had never been easy; he knew what it



meant to be weighed down by scruples, to live by faith alone in moments of great darkness, and to struggle against the blackest of thoughts. His moments of vision were few and far between, but he never told the secrets of his spiritual life, and as far as possible hid them from those around him. He was content to live, day by day, the faithful servant of his own work.

Whatever the extraordinary graces with which he may have been favoured, Ippolito never presumed upon them. He treated every matter of daily life in the light of common sense and prudence and left it in the hands of God. Some of his gifts naturally became well known. He foresaw the future with extraordinary clarity, and described the sense of uneasiness that would oppress him, then the lifting of the cloud and the flooding of his mind with light. He then became "all eyes" he said, and could see people and events with great precision. This state evidently came on him sometimes unawares, in the presence of some particular person, and he considered it as a Divine means of warning him how to direct his actions.

The *Vita* also makes much of his power of healing and quotes many well-attested cases of bodily ills miraculously cured by him, both in his lifetime and after death. Equally great was his power of reconciling enemies and producing that atmosphere of peace that all men long for, and so few achieve. His whole presence radiated calm and charity and joy, so much so that the very look on his face caused a murderer to pause. The man was standing at his door waiting to go and revenge himself on his mortal enemy. Ippolito courteously greeted him, an unknown stranger, and passed on his way, but the man's heart was touched, his mind was changed; he

turned back. Could any miracle be more wonderful than thus to quench the flame of hatred?

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The Compagnia had now so increased that Ippolito proposed to enlarge it by opening four chapels; and though he was able eventually to carry out his intention, he had first of all to face a storm of calumny. His enemies still hoped to undo his work, and the ingenuity of their malice was extraordinary. They first of all accused him of heresy, and denounced him to the inquisitor; then to the Grand Duke as an agitator, and finally to the Pope, who ordered a special inquiry. Ippolito emerged from the ordeal triumphant, and the Papal Nuncio, the Archbishop and the Grand Duke all saw where the truth lay. Cosimo II, like his father, and the whole Medici family, held Ippolito in the greatest veneration. They consulted him on many occasions, and the Grand Duke used to say that when he wanted sensible advice he asked it of Galantini. It shows indeed how great Ippolito's influence was that he had been able to ask Cosimo II to put an end to the public banquets which were usually held on great occasions. These merry-makings often led to great excesses, when many people got publicly drunk, and poor families were led into expenses that they could not afford. Anyhow, Ippolito considered them an evil, and his protest was promptly listened to.

The Grand Duke would willingly have punished Galantini's enemies, but he begged that they should not suffer on his account, and Cosimo contented himself with a report to the Pope in which he laid stress upon Ippolito's virtues, and upon the immense social importance of his work. The storm died down, though there were echoes of it in Modena, but it was

the rumble of distant thunder, no longer an active danger. Leo XI had called him the Apostle of Florence, and he had indeed deserved the title.

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Ippolito was now an ill man; he had suffered for years from an abscess in the chest, and catarrh of the ear had made him deaf, but his energy was undiminished. His zeal was such, that many of his friends felt the end must be approaching.

At last the four chapels for which he longed were finished. The work on them had been set back by incessant difficulties, but they had been completed largely through the generosity of the Grand Duke and Ippolito's friends and admirers the Grand Duchesses Maria Maddalena of Austria and Christine of Lorraine. "God has won! God has won!" he exclaimed; and doubtless there rose before his eyes visions of more children learning, more men saved from vice, more lives being sanctified. It was the last human satisfaction of his life.

In October 1619 he was at Fiesole staying with his friends the friars at San Francesco. The Grand Duke sent for him and he hurried down to Palazzo Pitti, but was seized by such bad asthma after the audience that he could hardly reach his own house. In spite of it he struggled back up to Fiesole next day, taking four hours to climb the hill. Once there he collapsed with high fever, bronchitis, and asthma. He was brought down in an ambulance early in November, and his friends thought he would die. "There, Brother Ass," he said to his poor body, "now you have the doctor for a new master. I give you over to him, and he shall do what he pleases with you." The doctor indeed could do little enough; but to Ippolito it was good news when he heard that he

could not recover. He lingered on some months, and very often those words of Saint Francis were on his lips: "Oh my God what art Thou, and what am I, Thy miserable creature?" In that tremendous question was all the secret of his life and his hope; and in it he found the answer he desired. In the meanwhile his disciples were praying that his life might be spared, and all their hearts turned to him when they recited the prayers he had instituted at the end of each meeting, for whichever brother of those present should be the first to die.

His friends the Grand Duke and Duchess, princes and princesses, the Cardinal Archbishop, and many others surrounded him with all the love and care they could, and endless visitors, rich and poor, asked to be admitted to see him. His patience never failed, though he acknowledged that without a special grace of God he could not have borne his illness unflinchingly. Every day his asthma grew worse. He could not sleep, and one night he was heard to say, and how many other sufferers have repeated his prayer: "O God of my heart; remember I am Thy poor creature, and give me just a little sleep."

During those months his thoughts were all for the Compagnia. He elected his successor; he comforted and cheered them all, for he knew that in March he would be gone. During the last weeks of his life beautiful visions came to console him. He saw his room full of children and flowers; he constantly felt the presence of Saint Francis beside him; and on Good Friday 1620, with the words, "*Convertere anima mea in requiem tuam,*" on his lips Ippolito Galantini's life quietly ended.

The news of his death ran through Florence, and soon a multitude was clamouring to see him, to obtain some relic of him, for many now venerated him

as a saint. Many apparitions are recorded; he was seen in the company of Saint Francis and other saints of the Order; a long series of miracles began; his virtues were extolled alike by high and low.

His writings were discovered, and all could read how in moments of temptation Ippolito had clung to his faith. There is a long and beautiful offering of his life, and prayer for when he should be dying, and it ends thus: "The Lord look upon me and bless me, and turn His face to me. The Lord have mercy upon me and give me peace; may the Lord give to me, Ippolito, His Blessing. Amen." "Benedicat me Imperiatis majestas: Protegat me regalis Divinitas, custodiat me sempiterna Deitas. Foveat me Immensa Trinitas, dirigat me inestimabilis bonitas; Regat me potentia patris; vivificet me sapientia filii, illuminet me virtus Spiritus Sancti, Alpha et Omega, Deus et Homo sit mihi ista benedictis, salus et protectis. Amen."

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Such was the life of this Florentine workman who became the counsellor and friend of princes, the apostle of his own city, and of something more, for Ippolito Galantini may well be considered one of the pioneers of all those good works which aim at the right education of the people. Throughout his life he fought against ignorance, and his talents and strength of mind and body were consumed in the strife. The Compagnia di San Francesco now has sadly dwindled, and the church in Via Palazzuolo is often shut. There it stands, however, and there Ippolito lies in his own home. But the rooms which once were full of his boys are now almost empty. Portraits of him and his successors still hang around the big hall, but few know his story, or penetrate into the adjoining



library. One large room is now a museum with some fine pictures and *objets d'art* given at one time or another to the Compagnia. There are two lovely Donatello heads, a splendid banner painting of Saint Francis, and needlework altar frontal, and there stand too the ewers and basins and plates which used to serve for the Cena dei Vanchettoni. We do not go there, however, only for these, but to bring a tribute of homage to this great man, who has left us such a memory of what one layman can do for his fellows. He was beatified in 1825.

Deus qui ad christianam parvalorum et rudium institutionem Beatum Hippolytum inter saeculi curas singulari charitate decorasti; ipsius meritis concede nos opere implere quae percepimus et ad promissa fidelibus gaudia pervenire. Per Dominum, etc.

*Roman Breviary.*

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CHAPTER VIII

BLESSED GIUSEPPE BENEDETTO  
COTTOLENGO

1786-1842

AND LA PICCOLA CASA DELLA DIVINA PROVVIDENZA

Established 1828

*Vita del Beato Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo* G. Antonelli-Costaggini.  
Turin, 1918.

*Il Venerabile B. G. Cottolengo* . . . P. P. P. Gastaldi.  
1882.

# BLESSED GIUSEPPE BENEDETTO COTTOLENGO

AND

LA PICCOLA CASA DELLA DIVINA PROVVIDENZA

Established 1828

How often we hear such phrases as "the scum of society," "the refuse of the streets," and to most of us they remain just phrases. Whoever enters the Piccola Casa has the concrete reality before his eyes. Good and evil meet and intermingle, it is true, at every turn of this intricate world, but nowhere are the two more dramatically contrasted as in the Città della Provvidenza; nowhere is the light more vivid, or the darkness more terrible. There is nothing picturesque about it, nothing beautiful from the aesthetic point of view, except the sky above our heads and the expression on the faces of those who serve that sublime and terrible place. There are just the naked facts of good and evil. Here one must not look for even orderliness in the building, for it is not one, but a huge collection of buildings bought, adapted, and added on to as necessity arose, with crooked lanes and irregular courts and squares between the different houses. It is indeed a maze which surely contains every form of the lowest human degradation and misery and the most radiant charity of which the human heart is capable.

When the door opens, the original door of 1831, it seems as though we were entering an ordinary busy convent, and a sister comes forward to show us

the way. She is one of the Sisters of Saint Vincent, Cottolengo's first religious family. She takes us to the chapel where his body lies and to the large central church, which even during his lifetime replaced the original one, grown far too small for the needs of such a household. We see the chief kitchen where cauldrons, in which drowning would be easy, hang on levers, and a score of Sisters of Saint Martha cook the daily food of thousands. Other girls and women are busy at the enormous washing-places; there are masons, carpenters, all the necessary trades to provide for the needs of a community, which is a small city. Our guide then takes us to the various "families" as they are called. Each house has its own chapel, its own motto over the door, and in each we are given the same Franciscan greeting of Cottolengo: "Sia laudato Gesu Cristo. Semper sia laudato." There is the family of Bethlehem for the foundlings, the family of Faith, of Hope, of Charity where hundreds of sick are nursed. There are other families more pitiable still, the consumptives; the blind; the deaf and dumb; the mad; the epileptics; some seemingly hardly human, the most terribly deformed. There are babies and children, some sick, some well; and over three hundred attend the elementary school, and are taught a trade which will make them independent. There are men and women, old and young, in every shape of misery and suffering and helplessness. How many? we ask. The sister smiles; she does not know exactly, for the number is never counted, according to the founder's wish. There must always be room for one more. To-day they amount to about ten thousand; and for a hundred years the Little House has lived, and grown, without one penny of invested capital, living upon alms for which its servants do not beg, but which are offered spontaneously,

and the daily bread has never been known to fail. The material upkeep of the Piccola Casa is surely a perpetual miracle and so is the vocation of the priests and nuns who serve it. To love Christ in His Sick is a beautiful thought, and a wonderful work anywhere, but when disease and evil assume the forms which one sees in the Città della Provvidenza, only the most heroic faith and love could face them and not succumb. How has all this come about? Literally by faith and charity, and here is the Gospel being indeed lived by hundreds of heroic souls before our eyes. They do not question the mystery of evil, or try to pierce the veil of suffering. They accept it in the spirit of the child looking to its father, whom it trusts implicitly, and who it knows cannot be mistaken. The Lord's Prayer is the foundation of the work of Cottolengo and his followers, and from every side of the Piccola Casa those petitions rise unceasingly. Prayer never flags throughout the community, and from the original group of Cottolengo's followers there arose many different religious families to whose houses we are taken. There are the Vincentine, the Martane, Orsoline, Genoveffe, Daughters of Mary, the Brothers of St. Vincent, the Rosarianti, these last being men vowed to silence and prayer. There are the Sisters of the Heart of Mary who are deaf and dumb, Sisters of Saint Teresa, Shepherdesses of Our Lady, Sisters of Good Counsel, Daughters of Saint Eliana, of St. Taide, Sisters of Suffrage and of the Cross, and others still. The members of these orders are all Franciscan Tertiaries like their founder, but they follow different rules and modes of life made to fill every spiritual need, and to give a home to every different vocation. There are the cloistered families, whose houses are regular convents, from whence the Divine Office rises day

and night and the life is purely contemplative, with the *Laus Perennis* of Perpetual Adoration. Without this side to its spiritual life the Città della Provvidenza could not fulfil its mission. Indeed in this house there are many mansions.

Like every other healthy plant, the Piccola Casa has grown from a seed which seemed small to the outside world, but contained that germ of life which knows no bounds. Its origin was the love of God in the heart of Blessed Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo, and that love of his neighbours which made him the friend of all that was poorest and most miserable.

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He was born in Bra, of parents in comfortable circumstances, on 3 May, 1786, the eldest of six children. At five years old he was measuring the walls of his father's house to see how many beds for the sick it could contain, and making plans to turn it into a hospital, "for when I am big I shall fill it with poor sick people." In after years when one of the sisters objected that the Piccola Casa would soon be like Noah's ark with the variety of its inmates, he could truly say: "Do not be afraid, these ideas are not of to-day, for see, little daughter, I was only four or five when God gave me the mission to found hospitals." He was a hot-tempered little boy; very much alive. From his childhood he showed signs of an unusual vocation and an unwonted piety. Continually he would sing any psalms and hymns he could remember, "because he was so happy," and when he invited the friends and neighbours to come and join the family of an evening for the Rosary, who could refuse him? The parish priest, Don Emanuele Amerano, thinking that the child promised well, urged his father to send him to school, and here



Giuseppe met with his first real difficulties. Just as he was certainly precocious in virtue, like his contemporary the Curé d'Ars, book-learning was for him a matter of tears and sorrow. It seemed as though he could not learn, and there is something pathetic in this little red-haired schoolboy, always at the bottom of the class, sending up a fervent invocation to Saint Thomas Aquinas for the gift of intellect. His prayer was granted, though Cottolengo's intelligence was never that of the schoolmen, but rather came from the quick sympathy of the heart. However, he afterwards passed the necessary examinations for the priesthood successfully, and all his life he remained the same; ready of wit, not given to intellectual subtleties, but able to deal with every variety of human nature with amazing insight and security. He was completely simple.

His youth passed during the hard times of the Napoleonic invasion, and poverty and destitution were everywhere in the towns of northern Italy. All the beggars of Bra knew Giuseppe Cottolengo, for he could refuse no one; and if he had nothing himself, would run home to fetch money, bread, anything he could find.

Two ideas seemed to have governed his inner life—the determination to become a saint, and the sense of the Presence of God. At sixteen he was received into the Third Order of Saint Francis by the Capuchin Fathers near Bra, and having escaped the strict Napoleonic law of conscription, he passed to the seminary at Asti and was ordained priest in 1811. From the first he had never doubted his vocation, and he showed an overwhelming joy and zeal in the service of the altar. His youngest brother, who often served his Mass, would ask his mother: "Why does Giuseppe cry so when he says Mass?" His

mother understood, even if she would not explain, and only answered: "Let him cry if he wants to, for the tears one sheds at the altar are sweet." Already to her and to many he was "Our Saint."

His life was that of a busy young parish priest, first in Bra, then in Corneliano where he was sent as curate. Don Giuseppe was indefatigable in his ministry, and soon every sick and poor person was his friend. "It seemed," so they said, "as though he could cure all ills." After a couple of years in Corneliano he was encouraged by Don Amerano, his old guide, to go to Turin and take his degree, and there the boy who had been so dull succeeded brilliantly. Study, however, for its own sake could never satisfy him, and he returned at once to Saint Andrea in Bra to take up the work of the parish for which he cared so deeply. An outbreak of typhus in 1817 gave him new opportunities for charity; and when his mother urged on him a certain degree of prudence and moderation, all that he answered was: "But I am a soldier, and where should soldiers be if not on the battlefield."

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The following year, 1818, he was appointed Canon of the Blessed Trinity of the Cathedral in Turin, and a member of the congregation of the Church of Corpus Domini. It was quite an unexpected honour; but during the time of his Turin studies the young Cottolengo had made a deep impression upon the other canons, and he had been unanimously elected. No one was surprised but Don Giuseppe himself. "What will they do with a piece of furniture like me in Turin? Why, I am only good for planting cabbages in Bra." The congregation of Corpus Domini had been founded in 1655, and was a community of secular

priests who served the church and parish, and lived under a rule rather like that of Saint Philip Neri. In the simple rooms of the Corpus Domini house, which was now Cottolengo's home, he made a little altar to Our Lady; here he kept several cages of canaries, and when he went out to his work he left them to sing her praises, telling them they should be proud to be called the "Musici della Madonna." His love of birds, of flowers, never left him. In the busy streets of Turin, and afterwards in the Piccola Casa, amid all the misery of humanity, he kept his gay and simple enjoyment of the sights and sounds of the country. Like Saint Francis, he carried them with him wherever he went.

It did not take long for every poor person of the parish to discover him. Here was a priest who was never too busy to be disturbed, who smiled at interruptions, and willingly followed any and every call. Soon he was known to all the sick of the neighbourhood, and no one who came to him was hurried away. "My dear friends, miei veri galantuomini"; that was what he called the poor who pressed upon him; and other less needy people, the rich and prosperous, also unable to resist his charms, began to offer him money and clothes for those less fortunate than themselves. No one could refuse when it was Canonico Cottolengo who asked. His room became a storehouse, but it was hardly full before a thousand needs had emptied it again. In those days no one had thought of district nursing; hospitals were few and poor; so Cottolengo urged his rich friends to go for themselves into the houses of the poor, take them what they needed, and try to relieve them. For himself he wished for nothing: he had indeed understood and answered to the call of Lady Poverty. Henceforth he was only known by one name, the "Canonico

Buono." Not only did he practise a glad poverty in the first and most obvious way, for soon there was nothing left of his personal belongings; he had also the poverty of spirit, that gaiety and happiness so dear to both Saint Francis and Saint Philip Neri. He was original too in the way that his great fore-runners had been, completely unself-conscious, for ever doing and saying the unexpected thing. If he was asked how he was: "Oh, I am always well," he would answer; "I have just come from a tavern, and if you are wise you will come there with me." And the tavern was the church, and the wine the love of God in the Blessed Sacrament with which he would say he was tipsy, or in his own favourite dialect, "Birba di Paradiso, cicot di santo amore." He was a treasure to the community life, for any melancholy and sadness melted away before him; his wit and his cheerfulness were never at a loss; nothing clouded the gay serenity which radiated from him.

It never left him in or out of church, and his sermons were full of it; no wonder that his hearers returned again and again. He soon gave up any careful preparation of his subject or search for telling phrases. He went into the pulpit as unconcernedly as anywhere else, and spoke as the Spirit moved him, according to his own words, "In Domino." Sometimes he had not even thought of a text and begged one from the sacristan or congregation. He was as spontaneous as his canaries, or the gurgling country streams he loved, but it was a spontaneity bought by hours of silent and hidden prayer, and emptying out of himself. He was asked to conduct a retreat for the university students. "Well, why should I worry? If Balaam's ass could talk when it was necessary, I suppose I shall be able to say something." What he said to the students was the catechism, the

great fundamental truths which he never tired of repeating; holding that everything was contained in a few simple words. His catechism classes indeed were so popular that, though they were meant for children, many other people at last wished to be admitted. He looked upon it as the foundation of all education; and if a boy or girl happened to be stupid or backward it was that one whom the canon sought out most eagerly to try and help. All his talk, his jokes, outside the church were permeated by the same spirit as his sermons. In an age when it was not the custom, his one thought was to bring all, if possible, to daily Communion, and frequent confession, which with him was essentially the Sacrament of Consolation. He would always go to confession himself in public to set an example; and he had found a spirit equal to his own in one of the Oratorian Fathers, Padre Michele Fontana. All who knew them would say: "Cottolengo reads the heart of P. Fontana just as Padre Fontana reads that of Canonico Cottolengo." "I have just come from San Filippo," Cottolengo would say, "but cosa vuole? I am always confessing, and never correct myself, always I promise and always remain the same—always lazy, always bad. And yet, and yet I want to go to Heaven. Happily, happily for me, God is merciful."

Padre Fontana was about to help his friend in an important decision. To the burning love of Cottolengo, all he had done, all that he did, seemed nothing, and his thoughts turned towards joining a religious order. It seemed to him that perhaps the vows of religion would help to still the unsatisfied longing of his heart, his desire for greater service and a more perfect immolation of himself. Should he join the Oratorians, or which other Order? Padre Fontana,



after much thought and prayer, decided the matter. "No, you must not become an Oratorian, but remain simply a poor priest in Turin, for God will use you for a work to His Glory." Cottolengo never hesitated again, and yet he sighed sometimes at how little he was doing. "Why I shall soon be old; an old bear, an old cobbler, drunk from morning till night, and never doing a thing."

For a moment it seemed as though his peace of mind were waning, and his companions at the Corpus Domini were troubled. One day the rector brought him the life of Saint Vincent de Paul, saying that it would surely help him. To Cottolengo it was one of those providential lights which come once in a lifetime. First of all Saint Francis, then Saint Philip Neri had been his guides in the spiritual life, and now in Saint Vincent de Paul he saw the practical application of a consuming charity. His life was to Cottolengo a revelation, for it revealed Cottolengo to himself, and made him aware that somehow he was called by a like vocation. The only thing lacking was the opening to give scope for his new conviction to be put into action. The opportunity soon came.

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On 2 September, 1827, a poor Frenchwoman who was passing through Turin was taken violently ill and died in a few hours in a miserable shed, for none of the existing hospitals could take her in. Cottolengo was hurriedly summoned to give her the last Sacraments, and there beside her body with an inconsolable husband and three little hungry children clinging to him, he knew that he had reached a turning point of his life. It was late in the evening when he got back to the Corpus Domini, and the church was about to be shut, but like a man in a dream he told the



sacristan to ring the bell, and he went straight to the altar of Our Lady and began the Litanies. His devotion to the Blessed Virgin seemed greater than ever that evening, and the handful of people who had come in, noticed that he was crying as he paused at the words "*Consolatrix Afflictorum*." Who knows whether at that moment he saw the vast multitude of sick and suffering, whom he would gather in, and all those others throughout the world whom he could but commend to her? At the end of the prayers he was radiant. "*La grazia è fatta*, blessed be the Madonna," he cried as he went back to the sacristy. That evening he told his colleagues all that had happened during the day, all that he hoped to do, and one and all came forward with offers of help and money.

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"*Fra il dire e il fare, corre in mezzo tutto il mare*," which is a true proverb respecting so many fine and exultant ideas, and like every other mortal, Cottolengo had to turn from the dream of what he wished to do, to the difficulty of its practical realisation. His ambition was modest at the beginning. He wanted one or two rooms in which to make a temporary refuge for such cases as the hospitals refused. The case of the poor Frenchwoman might be repeated any day, and there must be some place available where such people should be able to find shelter and care.

At first it seemed impossible to find any rooms, and delay was terrible to Cottolengo. At last he got four rooms in a house known as the *Volta Rossa*; four beds were ordered for which a friend promised to pay, and a poor workman offered to help with the necessary repairs. Cottolengo set his hand to everything, plastering, painting, carpentering, and in a few

weeks the place was habitable. On 17 January, 1828, the first inmate arrived, a poor paralysed woman, Margherita, unable to move hand or foot, whom Cottolengo welcomed as the "foundation stone" of the house.

Such was the humble beginning of the Piccola Casa, with its thousands of sisters, and tens of thousands of destitute. Very soon Margherita was joined by others—four, eight, twenty, thirty-five, and the rooms could hold no more. Cottolengo worked day and night, and somehow the whole house was put in order, and the necessary furniture forthcoming; somehow food and clothing were come by.

One of the characteristics which Cottolengo had in common with Saint Francis was his trust in human nature, which gave him the strength for such an undertaking. He always assumed that other people were as anxious to give as he was himself; that to them as to him it could only be a joy and a privilege. It was the human side of his absolute trust in the Divine Providence; it did not occur to him that the promise of the Gospel could fail, and so he went on day by day confident and serene, "in Domino." He needed a doctor for his sick, and one was found, Doctor Granetti, heroic in his devotion and constancy. A generous chemist offered all medicines for the moment, free of charge; other people with means came forward; the "rifugio" was fairly started, its end seemed accomplished. If any of Cottolengo's friends, however, expected him to pause, they were very much mistaken. To keep pace with him was like pursuing a chamois up hill; hardly had they come up with him, panting perhaps, than he was off with a bound and a smile to a farther height of charity and divine imprudence.

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It had been understood that the refuge was to afford temporary relief, but when there was a question of moving some of the patients to one of the regular hospitals they would not hear of going, and from the passing rifugio, the house became the permanent hospital of the Volta Rossa. One day Cottolengo's brother, a prudent Dominican, came to see him. "What! do you mean to tell me that with nothing you mean to found a hospital?" "Not for a moment," answered Cottolengo; "but who knows what the Providence of God means to do with us." The Canons of the Corpus Domini began to be alarmed, for in a sense they were all responsible for Cottolengo's enterprise, and the rector had often to bear the brunt of the anger of his unsatisfied creditors. His confidence and humility and smiling good temper got the better of their objections, and they fell back on the old saying, "Se sono rose, fioriranno."

And now there arose another great need and another great grace. Cottolengo had collected several women willing to help him in the work of the house, but that was not enough. Something more was necessary, and it was given him first of all by Marianna Nasi, a Franciscan Tertiary. She was a widow with an only son, and with eleven friends she devoted herself to Cottolengo's mission of charity. They were the first heroines of La Piccola Casa. Before a picture of Saint Vincent de Paul he gave each a little silver heart attached to a red rose on a green ribbon, the badge of service that every Vincenzina still wears to-day. At first they were not bound by any promise; by nothing but their desire to help, but after a time the necessary irregularity entailed by their family lives and ties made other arrangements necessary. At first Cottolengo tried to supplement the work of the twelve with that of other volunteers, till it became

more and more evident that theirs was indeed a religious vocation. They still had no vows and only the rule of the secular Third Order, but they definitely separated themselves from the world, and in 1830 the new little community went to live in the house of Marianna Nasi.

Every morning they were at Mass in the Church of the Corpus Domini, two in turn remaining to pray before the Blessed Sacrament during the day, while the others went to the hospital or to nurse the poor in their own homes. Cottolengo was with them continually. In the morning he would go to lead the prayers with which the day began for the hospital patients. He would help in every way, materially and morally; at the dinner hour he was always there, and again in the evening when he collected his new family around him for the Rosary, as he used to do in the old days at Bra in his own home. With all this he continued his work at the church, the office, confessions, and preaching, though now the rector would often blame him for his unpunctuality, and Cottolengo would only smile.

Everything seemed to be going well, and then, for no apparent reason, the sky began to cloud for the house of the Volta Rossa. The supplies which had come in so marvellously, dropped off, the first generous impulse on the part of friends grew less; human prudence was loud in advising a reduction in the number of the sick and general expenses. But human prudence had nothing to do with the Piccola Casa, which defied all the laws of human finance! At this juncture Padre Fontana came nobly to the rescue, and answered all the criticisms: "Is it, or is it not, true that to faith all things are possible? Let me tell you that the Canonico Cottolengo has more faith than the whole of Turin; therefore, if he does

not fear, why should we?" It was a difficult moment. Unkind tongues gossiped, and the Archbishop of Turin ordered an inquiry into the hospital affairs, but he was quickly convinced that it was indeed a supernatural work.

A heavy blow was dealt to Cottolengo's hopes in 1831 during an outbreak of cholera. The neighbours of the Volta Rossa persuaded the town authorities to shut the hospital as a possible centre of infection. This time the canons of the Corpus Domini really took fright. They saw themselves involved in an undertaking which threatened to be disastrous, and they were angry with Cottolengo for having brought the name of the congregation into what they thought was ridicule and disrepute. Cottolengo only thought of reopening and enlarging the hospital; the canons only of shutting it with dignity. The rector took him to task severely, but what was Cottolengo's answer: "One sees that you are not from Bra, and know nothing about cabbages. But I who come from the country have always heard that if the cabbages are to be really good they must be transplanted. So Divine Providence will transplant the hospital and from a small cabbage it will grow to be a fine big plant." "What!" cried the angry rector, "you are still thinking of the hospital! Why, after this business you will not be able to keep twenty patients." "On the contrary," replied Cottolengo, "Providence will soon send us a thousand."

Two years afterwards the inmates of the Piccola Casa numbered thirteen hundred.

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The news of the closing down of the house of the Volta Rossa ran through Turin. Many pitied the Canonico Buono, and some were glad; but his own



peace of mind was never shaken. He preached patience and courage to his little community of sisters, sure that soon a new way would be opened, and in the meanwhile he sent them to nurse the worst cases at home. It is easy now to say that those devoted women had no proper medical training, but it was long before the time of Florence Nightingale, and nursing everywhere consisted chiefly in the services suggested by kindness and common sense. Sometimes it had not these qualities, and all too often the professional nurse was of the race of Mrs. Gamp and Betsy Prig.

Cottolengo's followers in those early days must have brought hope and relief into countless poor homes, where illness at the best of times is so hard to cope with. One day as he was going to visit a sick person, a child begged of him in the street; she could find no work, and had no one to care for her. He took her to the *Piccola Casa*, the first member of the family of waifs and strays which soon grew so fast that there was nowhere to put them. A school was opened, then a crèche where children could be left whilst their parents went out to work, the first of its kind in Turin.

At that time just outside the town, going down to the River Dora, there was a large piece of wasteland called *Valdocco*. On it were various barns, and other tumbledown buildings. Cottolengo managed to secure it, and with the help of his friend the mason put one of the cottages in order. The Canons of *Corpus Domini* rather timidly agreed to this new scheme, and gave their consent to moving the furniture of the *Volta Rossa* house to this new centre. Being well away from other houses it could not be objected to on the ground of infection. In April 1832 the first patient, a young man with gangrene in the legs, was carried in through the small door over which



Cottolengo wrote the title: "Piccola Casa della Divina Provvidenza sotto gli auspici di San Vincenzo di Paolo," for he said: "In comparison with the whole world our house is indeed small; here Divine Providence alone is master, and in it all who are ill and miserable and destitute shall find their home." Saint Vincent de Paul was the protector and model of the house; all who desired to serve in it must do so from one motive only, the desire to conform to the charity of Christ and to live by the motto of Saint Paul, "Charitas Christi urget nos."

By this time the opposition to Cottolengo had died down, even his disapproving brother was won over, and urged that he should send a report of his work to the Pope. Protesting that his share in it was nothing, Cottolengo agreed to at any rate ask the Holy Father's blessing on the Piccola Casa. The approval and blessing were most readily given; the first recognition from Rome on the undertaking. The King Carlo Alberto, who had heard of it, sent for Cottolengo, and after hearing all his story, offered him government support for the Piccola Casa, but the Canonico Buono could only answer that he had placed the Piccola Casa entirely under the rule of the Divine Providence, and could accept no other control for it. It could never become a government institution. "But," objected the king, "even if during your lifetime the means never fail you to carry it on, there must come a day when you will die, and what will happen then? The Piccola Casa would be much safer, surely, under government protection." They were standing by the window, and in the square below the sentries were changing guard. An idea struck Cottolengo. "Look, Maestà, you see how those soldiers changed guard; one man came and the other left, with hardly a word and no

interruption of any kind. So it will be when God calls me away, for I am only a sentinel, and another will take my place and all will go on as before." The king could not but accept Cottolengo's words, and his interest in the Piccola Casa never failed. It was thanks to him that the patients were able to be sent when necessary to the baths of Acqui, and he always remained one of its chief benefactors. He insisted upon decorating Cottolengo with the Order of San Maurizio, and it was the Prince of Piedmont who, in 1835, brought him the gold medal of the Société Montyon et Franklin as a "benefactor of humanity." Orders to Cottolengo meant nothing, but he was prevailed upon to accept them as being an honour done to the ideal of charity of Saint Vincent de Paul.

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The sick were now pouring into the Piccola Casa from all sides. Consumptives, paralysed, blind, deformed, epileptic; no form of misery was lacking; and all, no matter what their private character, or their form of religion, were equally welcome. The poor were called the padroni of the house, and the worst cases the padronissimi, very much according to the idea of Saint Louis six hundred years earlier. It is only by reading an account of those years when the steadily-increasing stream of destitute humanity flowed into Valdocco, that one understands its apparent lack of plan and symmetry. House was added to house, courtyard to courtyard, as they became necessary, sometimes almost from one day to another, with no previous scheme or organisation. It was a huge improvisation, and spread like a growing body must and will, breaking down and overrunning whatever stands in its way.

In 1832 the first sisters had had the sorrow of losing their superior, Marianna Nasi, who had been indeed like a mother and sister to all of them, and her place was taken by Signora Angela Massia, a widow whose only wish was to dedicate herself to the work. Now that it had so increased, Cottolengo realised that a more definite religious organisation was necessary for the sisters. He took those who undoubtedly had a religious vocation into the Piccola Casa, and there subjected twelve of them to a most rigorous novitiate. They kept complete silence, enduring every conceivable bodily penance; he passed them through the mill of humiliation and obedience. Roughly and ridiculously dressed, he sent them out every morning to Mass, through the streets of the town where they had to pass amid the jeers of the passers-by. If any one asked who they were, the answer was not to be "we are the Sisters of Saint Vincent of the Canonico Cottolengo," but, "We are little cabbages and our superior is a much bigger one." He wrote no rule for them in those early days, but gave them short practical instructions and ordered their religious life according to their needs of the moment. His teaching was aimed at helping them to put into practice the great truths they had already learned; to live humbly and simply as he did himself. He had now moved from the house of the Corpus Domini with the consent of the rector, to live entirely in the Piccola Casa, and offered to give up his stall as canon. His colleagues, however, would not accept his resignation, and to the end of his life he remained canonico, and member of the Corpus Domini. He took away with him his few poor possessions, the picture of Our Lady and the canaries, which he still left to sing before Her altar. Permission, too, was given him to reserve the Blessed

Sacrament in the chapel of the Piccola Casa. The sisters of Saint Vincent, once the novitiate was over, took the vows of religion, and began their active work of caring for all the sick of the house. They were no longer to think of great austerities, or long hours of prayer; those were reserved for others. Their true devotion, he told them, was in the usual, simple prayers, offering their souls and bodies for the service of the poor, conquering any natural repugnance to their work of charity. For love of their neighbours they were plunged into misery and dirt up to their necks; that was the devotion asked of them. To their morning prayers he added the invocation: "Most Holy Trinity grant me the grace to use all my affections, my thoughts, words, and deeds for the good of those who suffer, to Thy honour and glory and the salvation of my own soul and that of my neighbour." Their charity, he told them, must be visible outwardly, "in such a good grace like a well-served dish which excites the appetite only to look at." Never was a sick person to have to call twice; cheerful, prompt, with a smiling face, never tired, never depressed—that was how the Sister of Saint Vincent was to appear to those around. One day a woman with a terrible skin disease was brought in and given into the care of a young sister, who was radiant with happiness. "Only see what a present our Father has given me," she called to a priest who was passing.

A chemical laboratory was established under the direction of a Franciscan Friar, who taught some of the sisters to make up the more simple medicines; other sisters were placed under Dr. Granetti to learn how to deal with broken limbs, cuts, and all the ordinary accidents of daily life. With the increase in the numbers of sick so the multitude of needs

multiplied, but the need was always met. Some young men came forward, wishing for the religious life and feeling drawn to the Piccola Casa. They were formed into the Brothers of Saint Vincent, and among them were doctors and teachers of all kinds.

Those inmates who could work were always encouraged to do so. Cottolengo only wished for simple handicrafts and education; but he wanted all to learn to read and write, and to become skilful in whatever trade could be most useful to their station in life. When the first deaf and dumb were admitted, he at once wrote to a doctor in Genoa who had specialised in teaching them, and invited him to come and help in the work. Paolo Basso answered by coming at once, and so became the "father" of this new family.

In dealing with the deaf and dumb a new development arose in the Piccola Casa. Cottolengo discovered that some of these poor girls had a deep religious vocation. He promptly made them into sisters, dedicated them to Our Lady, contemplatives, whose work was prayer for the conversion of the world. Thus for the first time in the history of the Church, the Divine Office was recited on the hands and fingers, and that silent praise continues to-day. These sisters also did, and still do, the needlework for the Church, for however poor the house might be, Cottolengo wished everything around the altar to be precious, fine, and beautiful.

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The following years saw the institution of the most varied religious Orders within the Piccola Casa. They arose, it seemed, often on the spur of the moment, although from the day when the Vincenzine took their vows, Cottolengo had the certainty in his own



mind, that many rules and many orders were necessary for his work. Prayer, penance, contemplation, must each have their place, in his all-embracing family, for prayer was the wheel on which the Piccola Casa alone could run. The actual establishment of the different religious houses was nearly always sudden and unexpected as all else that he did.

He wrote one of the contemplative rules on two old envelopes, as he watched one night before the altar and the new idea came to him. The Order of Suffrage, where the sisters pray unceasingly for the souls in Purgatory with perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, was founded one day when Cottolengo was looking at a new building and saw in a flash what use it was to be put to. He called a few sisters of Saint Vincent and told them his idea, asking them to suggest a superior. "Why not Sister Catherine, the excellent mistress of Novices?" Sister Catherine was sent for. "Oh, my little cabbage, here you are. I am making you an abbess." "Deo gratias," answered Sister Catherine, as she knelt for his blessing, giving a fine example of the obedience she preached.

Another contemplative community following the Carmelite rule was established in the same way; then followed quickly the Pietadine, dedicated to the Sorrows of Our Lady, also with perpetual adoration, for the *Laus Perennis* must never stop day or night in Valdocco. Then came the Daughters of Saint Taide. These last saved from a life of sin and corruption; and others still, all given up to prayer. Among the men Vincenzini too new branches were formed. First came the Rosarianti, a contemplative community in honour of the mysteries of the Rosary; then the Hermits of San Romualdo, with perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in their isolated chapel.



Another congregation was formed for boys wishing to become priests, under the patronage of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and, finally, in 1841, the community of secular priests of the Blessed Trinity dedicated to the service of the Piccola Casa.

All these different religious orders were consecrated to Our Lady like the whole Franciscan Order, and Cottolengo's devotion never lost its Franciscan character. Both materially and spiritually the Piccola Casa was a genuine flower of the Franciscan tree. His own single mindedness and simplicity, his spontaneity and burning charity make him the direct descendant of the first companions, the disciple of Brother Giles and Brother Leo, and, indeed, of the Seraphic Father himself. His dislike of money was certainly as great as that of Saint Francis; if ever he had any, which was rare, he gave it away, or threw it out of the window, and if ever a man was in love with Lady Poverty it was he. When money was left to the Piccola Casa, it had to be used to buy more houses or beds, or other necessities, or to be given away to other poor. On no account could it be kept and invested, and such is the rule to-day. His faith in Providence housed and fed and clothed thousands, and has continued to do so for a century. At the critical moment help always came, and comes; and this faith was proof against every trial and attack. Cottolengo suffered acutely from the debts he made, not for his own sake, but from the knowledge that others were inconvenienced and hurt, and that was to him a martyrdom. He suffered as only the honest man can suffer when he finds himself unable to pay his just debts. Nothing though could shake his serenity. "It will all come right, in Domino, have patience a little longer," he would say; "I can pay nothing, but Divine Providence will pay you all";

and over and over again mysterious strangers or friends appeared to settle the debts. When he had not one penny, and the creditors would not leave the house, his own pockets were suddenly filled with gold pieces, and the empty money-box when opened would be found to contain the exact sum necessary for some urgent need.

He knew all the anxieties and worries of the poor father of a large family; and what a family! To each and all he was the "Father," loving each one individually, the sisters and brothers he had formed in the spiritual life, the old, the sick, the idiots. He played with the children as though he were a boy, consoled the unhappy, taught and encouraged all, and every need, material and spiritual, was brought to him. He had time, and sympathy, and love, for all. He who had so repeatedly said that his idea of happiness was the contemplative life, accepted gladly to live in the midst of the daily and hourly calls of thousands of people. He lived indeed the life of prayer, but under the most difficult conditions that it is possible to imagine.

All his activity, his practical work, was prepared for by long hours of prayer and penance. No one might disturb him in the morning before his Mass was said, and not for the king would he have hurried over one word of his Office. "When I recite the Breviary," he once said, "I always see Jesus Christ standing at my right hand," and his sense of the Presence of God was surely the secret of His power. Many times he was seen with his face transfigured during Mass, and raised above the earth in ecstasy; but always he tried to conceal these graces, to pass them off as nothing. Sometimes, however, the sisters were too quick for him. The portress who went one day to his room to give him a message

could get no answer, and looking through the key-hole, saw him in the air with arms outstretched, quite unconscious of anything. She opened the door and went in, and afterwards, when Cottolengo could not deny what had happened, he only forbade her to speak of it. He gave orders that no one was to come to his room unless he called or rang his bell; but when he was an hour late in coming down to Mass, it was useless to try to hide the reason, nor could he prevent the sisters from repeating what they saw.

He wished above all to impart to the *Piccola Casa* the spirit of prayer which he knew to be the secret of happiness. His one idea was to open to each and all something of the love of God. He himself prayed unceasingly, and he wanted all to pray, "for prayer makes us dear to God. Let us pray, therefore, always; the more we pray, the more generously He will give us all that is necessary for our sanctification. Does He not know our needs much better than we do ourselves?"

Each of the different families had prayers in their own chapel at different hours of the day, and those who were able came to the central church for the Father's Mass in the morning. Most of these poor people were quite illiterate and uneducated, and he wished them to use no long or complicated prayers. The Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and Gloria were enough; and, after all, they contain everything. He taught them the Rosary and devotions to the Blessed Virgin with all the love he felt for her himself. She was the Mother of each of his children, and of the *Piccola Casa* as a whole, from whom he had received his vocation, and to whom he turned for everything.

In his own spiritual no less than material life Cottolengo appears as one of those beings especially endowed for some great work, who leave on one side

all else, both good and bad, that they may concentrate in the one view, the one aspect of Christianity necessary for their own particular calling.

Like San Filippo Neri, he wanted all who could to be busy and gay. "Gaiety has never spoilt sanctity," he used to say; "and the saints are the most contented people in the world." He certainly was; and his sanctity radiated about him like sunlight. When occasion demanded he could reprove severely, especially any evil speaking of others, and if he thought that some brother or sister had not the right vocation for the *Piccola Casa*, he did not hesitate to say so, and to send them away. His hatred of sin was just as great as his love for the sinner, and his great care was for the moral and spiritual life of each one of his children.

. . . . .

With each year Cottolengo's responsibilities increased; so did his child-like trust. People no longer called him the *Canonico Buono*, but the *Canonico Santo*. The *Piccola Casa* naturally became known throughout Piedmont and Savoie, and various places asked for sisters to help in the local hospitals. The first group went to Carogni Canavese, a second to Utelle, then Voghera, Genoa, Nice, until to-day the red rose and green ribbon of the Vincenzine are known all over the world. They carried with them the practices and, above all, the spirit of their Father. He would often send them with a letter of introduction which ran: "Here are four stupid, but they will do what they can to help; be patient with them." On one point he was rigid: they must be given every opportunity for their daily Communion even as in the *Piccola Casa*. This Cottolengo never ceased to urge as the centre of all spiritual life. Without it

for him the day was lost; with it all was possible in Domino.

Cottolengo was not only called upon to suffer from the cares and bothers which resulted naturally from his vast undertaking. There were many instances also of the active troubling of the powers of evil. It is now no longer fashionable to deny categorically the existence of the devil, and belief in an active evil power is apparent among many people to-day. Most of us probably never come into personal contact with it, in the sense that the devil does not come and disarrange our rooms, to beat and ill-treat us. We do not know him by our senses, and therefore he threatens to become for us a mere abstraction or, at any rate, only a moral danger. He has never been an abstraction for the saints. For certain natures undoubtedly constituted in a special way, for special reasons, he is as concrete and alive as any of their fellow human beings, and they suffer physically, just as much as morally, at his hands. Shall we deny the truth of their accounts of such visitations? But then, on what grounds? If we accept as true the statements made by persons whom we consider honest, with regard to matters that we can personally control, what right have we to assume that they lie when they tell us of things which lie in the vast tracts of psychic and spiritual life outside our own limited experience? To accept one and refuse the other statement is surely a purely arbitrary choice on our part.

There were many perfectly creditable witnesses of these attacks of the devil in person against the Piccola Casa, and against Cottolengo and his followers. He never allowed himself to be disturbed by these visits or wished them spoken of, and it was the same for the other supernatural manifestations which



happened in Valdocco. He undoubtedly had the gift of reading the minds of those about him, which far surpassed the most acute intuition, and perpetually he would surprise them by his knowledge of their most secret thoughts. He prophesied many things about the future; of certain people of the Piccola Casa and also his own death. One sister seemed at the point of death, but he assured her she still had years to live, and to work in a new settlement up in the mountains; to another, seemingly well, he said she would be dead in a few months. His powers of healing were great; and there were many well attested cases of the cures he worked, sometimes by a touch, sometimes by a word, but always with the same simplicity, so that a sick child restored to health could say, as though it were the most natural thing in the world: "Il babbo mi ha guarito."

When all outside help seemed to fail, and only a handful of flour remained in the house, he told the sister to make the bread as usual. She obeyed, and loaf after loaf came from the flour, and all were fed. Nor has this only happened once.<sup>1</sup>

What, though, are these miracles, if thus we call them, to the perpetual miracle of his faith and love?

. . . . .

Cottolengo had laboured without rest for many years, but he knew now that his work was done.

On the second Sunday in Lent of 1842 he sent for his brother, P. Alberto the Dominican, from his convent. They spent the day together; and if on former occasions P. Alberto had often criticised the Canonico nothing now came between them. Before he left, Cottolengo gave him some prints and kissed him, saying: "Kneel down for my blessing, for I want

<sup>1</sup> For details of these cases see *Gastaldi*, Vol. II, Book vi.



to give you something you can always keep." P. Alberto left for Genoa a few days later and wrote to his other brother, Agostino: "Giuseppe has never treated me like that; can it be that we shall not meet again?"

The Father began a round of farewell visits to each of his convents and monasteries and to every corner of the Piccola Casa. Some perhaps understood, and others not, that it was indeed a leave-taking. On Low Sunday he went to the Monastery of the Suffrage. "An old man come to bless you," he said, adding: "in this world I shall not see you again. Pray for me, for I am come to the end of my days; pray that I may not appear before my God full of unpaid debts." The Canonico Santo was worn out; every day his health was giving way; he had been ill with typhus, and a brutal assault one evening in the streets by some hooligans left him wounded and shaken.

He decided to go to Chieri, to the house of his brother, "to rest."

The sisters were in despair, so was every one of his children. "Never mind," he said; "I cannot do anything more for you in this world; but when once I get to Heaven then I will help you more than ever. I shall get quite close to Our Lady, so as to be able to pull her by the cloak, and keep her eyes always fixed upon you. I can only give you one thing, my blessing."

As he left the Piccola Casa the first sentinel had given up his place to the second, Padre Anglesio; the guard had been changed silently, without any fuss, just as he wished.

He went to Chieri to his brother the Canonico Luigi's house, and indeed he was utterly exhausted. He acknowledged that he had never slept in his bed

for four years, but now he lay quiet, and for three days wished to be left quite alone. He then saw Dr. Granetti from Valdocco, and inquiries for him poured in from every side. He only wished to give no trouble. "I will stay here till Saturday, and then all in Domino." He was right. On Saturday he was indeed with God.

His body was brought back to Turin and laid to rest in the Piccola Casa, beneath the statue of Our Lady, as he had wished, and there he lies, "inter filios Pater."

Every inmate of Valdocco, the king, Turin and all Piedmont already looked upon him as a saint, and the cause of beatification was begun almost immediately. The first decree on his heroic virtue was approved in 1901 by Pope Leo XIII; on Easter Sunday, 1917, he was beatified by Benedict XV, and his canonisation is said to be near at hand.

Turin put up a fine monument to the Canonico Santo; but what monument was necessary? The Piccola Casa during the years since his death has continued to grow according to his prophecy and remains the great and unfailing memorial to this life of Divine faith and charity.

. . . . .

Deus qui in Te confidentibus paterna largitate succuris: Beati Joseph Benedicti intercessione concède; ut derelictis pauperibus servientes promissa misericordibus paraemia consequamur. Per Dominum.

*Roman Breviary.*

## APPENDIX I

Primitive Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance that is of the Third Order of Saint Francis.<sup>1</sup>

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.—Amen.

Memorial of the Resolutions of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance living in their own homes, A.D. 1221, in the time of the Lord Pope Gregory IX, 13th day of June, the first indication of which is as follows.

### I. OF THE MANNER OF DRESS

1. The men of this congregation shall wear garments of common cloth the price of which shall not exceed six soldi of Ravenna the ell, and from this they shall not be dispensed without proper cause and necessity. And the width and length of the stuff shall be included in the said price.

2. The mantle and cape shall be close to the neck, sewn down, and whole without buckle, and they shall wear long sleeves, closed at the end.

3. The sisters shall wear a cloak of this same cloth, and a tunic, or at least besides the cloak a gown without trimming, either black or white. Or they shall wear an ample linen robe, without gathers, the cost of which shall not exceed twelve denari of Ravenna the ell.

4. From this price and manner of dress each may be dispensed, according to her condition and the custom of the place of her dwelling.

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<sup>1</sup> "Regula antiqua Fratrum et sororum de Poenitentia seu Tertii Ordinis Sancti Francisci."—Paul Sabatier, *Opusculs de critique historique*. Paris, 1901.

5. Veils or ribbons or colours shall not be worn, and let both brothers and sisters have furs of simple lambs' wool.

6. Leather bags and belts shall be sewn without silk, and nothing else shall they have. Every other ornament they shall put away at the discretion of the Visitor.

7. They shall not go to any unseemly meeting-place, or to the theatre or to dance, and let them take no part in acting or allow those of their family to do so.

## II. OF ABSTINENCE

1. Let all abstain from meat except on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, unless they be ill or weak, or travelling.

2. They shall also be especially dispensed from abstinence for three days of each of the following feasts: the Nativity of Our Lord, the Circumcision, Epiphany, Easter, St. Peter and St. Paul, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the Assumption of the glorious Virgin Mary, the Feast of All Saints and that of Saint Martin.

3. On the days when there is no fast it is lawful to eat cheese and eggs. If they should be with religious in their convent they may also eat with them.

4. And let them be content with dinners and suppers, unless they be sick or travelling. And let them be temperate in healthy food and drink.

5. Before dinner and supper let them say one Pater Noster, likewise afterwards with Gratias agant Domino. Let them say three Pater Noster.

6. From Easter to All Saints let them fast on Fridays. From All Saints to Easter let them fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, and observe any other fast which may be indicated by the Church.

## III. OF FASTING

1. During the Lent of Saint Martin, from his feast till Christmas and during the greater Lent from the Sunday of

Carnival to Easter let them fast continually unless prevented by illness or some other necessity.

2. Sisters who are pregnant are dispensed until their purification from all bodily restrictions of the rule, except those that regard dress and prayer.

3. All who perform hard work from Easter to the feast of St. Michael may eat three times a day.

4. And those who are employed by others may eat of everything except on Fridays and on those fast days appointed by the Church.

#### IV. OF PRAYER

1. Let all say every day the Seven Hours, that is Mattins, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline.

2. Let priests say them according to the priestly order, and all those who know the Psalter shall say first of all *Deus in Nomine Tuo* and *Beati Immacolati* as far as *Legem pone*, and the other Psalms of the Hours with the *Gloria Patri*.

3. If they do not go to church, let them say for Mattins the Psalms ordered by the Church, or at least some other XVIII Psalms. Those who cannot read shall say *Pater Noster*.

4. There shall be twelve *Pater Noster* for Mattins, and for every other Hour seven *Pater Noster*, with the *Gloria Patri* after each one.

5. Let those who know them say the *Credo in Deum* and *Miserere mei Deus* at Prime and Compline, and if they do not say the full Hours let them recite again *Pater Noster*. The sick shall not say the Hours or keep a vigil.

#### V. WHEN ALL MUST GO TO MATTINS

1. All must go to Mattins during the Lent of Saint Martin and the greater Lent, and they shall not be kept therefrom by either persons or things unless it be for some grave impediment.

VI. OF CONFESSION AND COMMUNION AND OTHER DUTIES  
AND OF HOW THEY SHALL NOT CARRY ARMS, NEITHER  
TAKE OATHS

1. Let all confess their sins three times a year and receive Communion at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.

2. Let them pay all taxes justly due, also those for the past.

3. Let none accept to bear arms against any man or carry them himself.

4. Let all refrain from solemn oaths unless in cases of urgent necessity, exceptions made by the Sovereign Pontif in the cause of peace, of defence of the faith, or of bearing witness.

5. And in their speech let all refrain from swearing. And whoever incautiously *lapsu linguae* should fall into an oath through much talking, that same day at evening when all must examine themselves let him make amends for the oath with three Pater Noster.

6. Let all encourage their families to the service of God.

VII. OF THE MONTHLY MASS AND CONGREGATION

1. Let all the brothers and sisters living in the same city and place, when it may be found expedient, meet together in the church announced by the Minister and there hear the Divine Word.

2. And let each one give to the Massario one of the usual denari that the said Massario with the counsel of the Minister may distribute them amongst the needy brothers and sisters, and when necessary bear the funeral expenses of those who have no means, or give to the poor of the church where the meeting is held.

3. And when possible let them be instructed in the Word of God by a religious, who shall comfort them to persevere in the way of penance and in all works of mercy.

4. And let them keep silence during the Mass and sermon and during the prayers and preaching beside the Office only those in authority may speak.



VIII. OF THE WORKS OF MERCY, AND THE MAKING OF A  
WILL AND THE HEALING OF DISCORDS

1. When any of the brothers or sisters fall ill let them announce it either themselves or by others, and they shall be visited once a week and exhorted to penitence.

IX. OF THE BROTHERS DEPARTED THIS LIFE

1. And if any sick brother or sister shall depart from this life, let it be announced to all the brothers and sisters of the city or place, and let them not fail to assure to him proper burial and let them be present at the Mass and when the body is brought to the grave.

2. And after eight days from the death, the priests shall say mass for the departed soul, those who read the Psalter fifty Psalms, and the others fifty Pater Noster with Requiem Aeternam after each one.

3. Besides this, within a year the priests shall say three Masses for the salvation of the brothers and sisters both living and dead; those who know the Psalter shall say it, the others shall say an hundred Pater Noster with Requiem Aeternam at the end of each one. Sometimes these prayers shall be duplicated.

X. OF MAKING A WILL

1. All who can lawfully do so, within three months of their profession, shall make a will and let no one die intestate.

2. Should any outside cause trouble the peace between the brothers and sisters, and the Minister be aware of it, let him appeal to the judgment of the Bishop of the diocese.

3. If any authority or the governors infringe the privilege or vex the brothers and sisters of the place, let the Minister with due advice have recourse to the Bishop.

4. And on whosoever the office of Minister or any other office here mentioned be imposed, let him accept it, and

faithfully perform it, though he may vacate it after the space of one year.

5. The Minister shall inquire into the condition and office of any who shall ask to be admitted to this fraternity, and shall explain to him the duties of the fraternity and the precept of restitution of all belonging to others.

6. And if he shall agree to live according to the aforesaid rule, let him satisfy any creditors, either by money or by a given security. He shall pay this title and be reconciled to all.

7. When this is fulfilled after one year, with the consent of some discreet brothers, he may be received on these conditions.

8. That he promise to observe all that is here written or may be added or taken away, according to the Council of the brothers, all the time of his life, and never depart therefrom but with the consent of the Minister.

9. And in whatsoever way he may offend against it, if he be questioned by the Minister, he shall make satisfaction according to the judgment of the Visitor.

10. And let him make public promise in writing thereto.

11. And let no one on any account be received in any other way, not anything be considered but the person's manner of living and his diligence in this matter.

12. Let no man depart from this fraternity or from what is here contained unless it be to enter into religion.

## XI. OF THE CONTEMPT AND HEARING OF HERETICS

1. Let no heretic or anyone accused of heresy be received. If, however, a man be only suspected of it, and he be fully cleared of the charge before the Bishop, then he may be received.

2. Women having lawful husbands shall not be received without the consent of their husbands.

3. Any brother or sister who has been expelled from the fraternity for his incorrigible behaviour shall in no wise be again received, unless it be pleasing to the just brothers.

## XII. OF DECLARING FAULTS

1. The Minister of each place shall manifest the faults of the brothers and sisters to the Visitor, that he may punish them.

2. And if anyone shows himself incorrigible to the Minister, with the counsel of discreet brothers he shall inform the Visitor, and the offender shall be expelled from the fraternity, and it shall be published in the congregation.

3. Besides this, if it be a brother, let him be denounced to the governor or civil authorities of the place.

4. Should anyone advise brothers or sisters of any scandal, let it be told to the Minister and it be well to tell it to the Visitor, unless it be between husband and wife, when it is not compulsory to denounce it.

5. The Visitor has power to dispense the brothers and sisters from any of the aforesaid prescriptions as he may find it expedient.

6. Let the Minister with the Council of his brothers after a year elect two other assistant Ministers and a faithful Massarium, who shall provide for the necessities of the needy brothers and sisters and the other poor.

7. In all the aforesaid, none is bound under pain of sin; but after being twice admonished by the Minister he shall receive whatsoever penance the Visitor may impose upon him, otherwise his contumacy shall bring him to sin.

## XIII. OF THE SHOWING OF FAULTS

1. We decree that no one of this fraternity shall act for another unless he do it with the permission of the Minister or Visitor.

2. The Visitor, with the consent of the Minister and other brothers, may dispense the brothers from going to church if in that time they recite carefully Mattins and the other Hours.

3. Likewise it be well if the brother confess to a priest

once in the month, for in holy Absolution all sins are washed away and God gives greater grace.

4. Therefore the Visitor or Minister of the fraternity shall beg the Minister or Guardian of the Friars Minor of that place for a friar of the convent to counsel the brothers, for it is the wish of the fraternity to be in all things guided and governed by a friar.

5. And if the friar should leave the convent, they shall ask for another in his place, that the fraternity may always be directed by a counsel of a Friar Minor as Blessed Francis established.

6. Therefore let all the brothers meet together on the first Sunday of every month for Mass in the place of the Friars Minor, neither let the Minister or Visitor postpone it without just and legitimate cause. And let them likewise meet after None.

7. Therefore if the Visitor or Minister cannot for some just and legitimate cause be present when the fraternity meets together, let them appoint a Vicar who shall hold their place and exercise their office.

8. Therefore if any brother of the fraternity shall have caused any public scandal or other excess, let him accuse himself of it publicly before all the brothers when they shall be congregated together.

9. And if he will not accuse himself, and another brother knows of his fault, he shall accuse him in public and the Visitor or Minister or their Vicar shall impose on him a penance with mercy, unless the fault be such as to cause him to be expelled from the Order.

10. Nothing new shall be added to this constitution without the consent and approval of the majority of the brothers.

11. Therefore if anyone wishes to enter our Order he shall first restore any ill-gotten gains, as far as in him lies.

12. And if he be in doubt whether he may possess any goods unlawfully and should he not know how much and to whom he must make restitution, then let him cause it to be cried abroad and from the pulpit on a feast day that which

seems to him just to satisfy the demands of all who may have any claim on him.

13. Let no brother institute legal quarrel before the magistrate or judge on any subject or for any cause against any other brother or sister of our Order, unless it be with the approval and consent of the Minister and Visitor and the majority of the brothers of that place.

14. Then we wish and establish that if there should arise any discord or quarrel between the brothers, for whatsoever cause, the Minister and Visitor shall judge of it, and according to their discretion and judgment the matter shall be decided.

15. And whatsoever the Visitor or Minister may undo or change of what is said, all the brothers must respect, that between the religious and secular brothers, God willing, no scandal may arise. Here is the end.

## APPENDIX II

It is no easy task to compile a list of the Tertiary Saints, and the following one does not pretend to be complete. It is taken from the Franciscan Breviary, the Chronicle of Fra Mariano, and various Franciscan archives, but there are certainly many Franciscan Beati with a local cult whose names are not mentioned.

Saint Louis IX, King of France	.	.	1215-1270
Elizabeth of Hungary	.	.	1207-1231
Verdiana	.	.	1182-1242
Ferdinand of Castile	.	.	1198-1252
Zita di Lucca	.	.	1218-1288
Cunegund of Poland	.	.	1224-1292
Rose of Viterbo	.	.	1235-1252
Christina di Santa Croce	.	.	1240-1310
Margaret of Cortona	.	.	1247-1297
Ives of Brittany	.	.	1253-1303
Isabel of Portugal	.	.	1271-1336
Eleazar de Sabran	.	.	1285-1323
Chiara of Montefalco	.	.	1268-1308
Corrado di Piacenza	.	.	1290-1351
Bartolo	.	.	1228-1300
Roch of Montpellier	.	.	1295-1327
Bridget of Sweden	.	.	1303-1373
Elizabeth of Lasitania	.	.	†1336
Francesca Romana	.	.	1384-1440
Angela Merici	.	.	1470-1540
Joan of Arc	.	.	1411-1431
Giacinta Mariscotti	.	.	1585-1640
Vitale di Bastia	.	.	†1491
Vincent de Paul	.	.	1576-1630
Carlo Borromeo	.	.	1539-1584
François de Sales	.	.	1567-1622
Paolo della Sta Croce	.	.	†1507



Jean Baptiste La Salle . . .	1651-1719
Margaret Mary Alacoque . . .	1647-1690
Paulus Susugui . . .	
Gabriel Ize . . .	
Joannes Quizuja . . .	
Thomas Ize . . .	
Franciscus Madicus . . .	
Thomas Cosaqui . . .	
Joachino Saquijos . . .	
Bonaventura Meaco . . .	Martyred in Japan
Antonio Nagasaki . . .	1597
Ludovicus Sbarchi . . .	
Paulus Guaniqui . . .	
Michael Coquiqui . . .	
Petrus Suqueixen . . .	
Cosimus Ragnja . . .	
Franciscus Fatelante . . .	
Mathia Meaco . . .	
Paolo Sbarchi . . .	
Maria Francesca della Cinque Piaghe	†1791
Bénoit Joseph Labre . . .	1748-1783
Jean Baptiste Vianney . . .	1786-1859
Marie Madeleine Postel . . .	1750-1840
Blessed Lucchesio . . .	†1232
Bonadonna . . .	†1232
Blanche of Castille . . .	1187-1252
Nuvolone da Faenza . . .	1200-1280
Umiliana dei Cerchi . . .	1219-1246
Torello da Poppi . . .	1202-1282
Douceline . . .	1214-1282
Bartolomeo di Romandiola . . .	1222
Gualterius . . .	†1245
Pietro da Siena . . .	†1289
Leo, Archicp. Mediolanensis . . .	†1263
Gherardo di Villamagna . . .	1242-1277
Giovanna da Signa . . .	1244-1307
Angela da Foligno . . .	1248-1309
Ramon Lull . . .	1235-1315
Martolesinus . . .	1221

Blessed Pietrus da Colle . . . . .	1221
Richardus de Forosempronio . . . . .	†1255
Vivaldus . . . . .	†1230
Bona . . . . .	†1260
Lucchesio . . . . .	†1260
Gherardo de Lunel . . . . .	1277-1319
Delphine de Sabran . . . . .	1283-1360
Michelina da Pesaro . . . . .	1300-1356
Francesco a Pesaro . . . . .	†1350
Guglielmo da Siuli . . . . .	1309
Jacobus . . . . .	†1304
Alessandro da Perugia . . . . .	†1363
Joannes di India . . . . .	1340
Pelingottus da Urbino . . . . .	†1304
Rostagnus . . . . .	1310
Tommaso da Foligno . . . . .	1377
Angelina Corbara . . . . .	1377-1435
Christiana . . . . .	1310
Petrus da Roma . . . . .	1358
Joannes de Masaccio . . . . .	1399
Jeanne de Maillé . . . . .	1331-1414
Ugolino Megalotti . . . . .	1373
Giovanni della Pace . . . . .	1353-1433
Henry of Denmark . . . . .	1418
Luisa Albertoni . . . . .	1474-1533
Elisabeth of Walsech . . . . .	1435
Casimir of Poland . . . . .	1443-1483
Antonia di Firenze . . . . .	1401-1472
Niccolo di Vorcapalena . . . . .	
Robertus de Ariminio . . . . .	1432
Marianna di Gesù . . . . .	
Guy de Bourg St. Jaques . . . . .	
Lucia di Salerno . . . . .	1400
Elisabetha Bona . . . . .	1421
Lucia di Caltagirone . . . . .	1400
Paola Gambara . . . . .	1505
Jeremia Lambertughi . . . . .	1513
Ippolito Galantini . . . . .	1565-1620
Leone Satzuma . . . . .	

Blessed Lucia Fleites . . .	
Ludovicus Baba . . .	
Gaspere Mas . . .	
Thomas Mo . . .	
Franciscus Cufioie . . .	
Luca Kirmon . . .	
Michaeli Chizaieman . . .	
Ludovicus Matzuo . . .	
Martino Gomez . . .	
Joannes Tomachi . . .	
Domenicus Tomachi . . .	
Michaeli Tomachi . . .	Martyred in Japan 1617-1632
Thoma Tomachi . . .	
Paulus Tomachi . . .	
Romanus Japonia . . .	
Matteo Alvarez . . .	
Michaeli Imada . . .	
Laurentius Imada . . .	
Ludovici Nifachi . . .	
Thoma Tzugi . . .	
Ludovici Magui . . .	
Franciscus . . .	
Domenicus . . .	
Aloysius Japonia . . .	
Maria Voz . . .	
Maria Crescentia Höis . . .	†1744
Liba Crocifissa . . .	†1773
Antonio Alfonso Bermeis . . .	†1758
Maria Crocifissa delle Cinque Piaghe . . .	†1826

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